

THE COMING OF ARTHUR
AND
THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.



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GENERAL INTRODUCTION,

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ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, was born on August 6th, 1809, at Somersby, a village in Lincolnshire, of which his father was rector. The wolds surrounding his home, the fen some miles away, with its "level waste" and "trenched waters," and the sea on the Lincolnshire coast, with "league-long rollers" and "table-shore," are pictured again and again in his poems.

When seven years old, he went to the Louth Grammar School, and returning home after a few years there, was educated with his elder brother Charles by his father. Charles and Alfred Tennyson, while yet youths, published in 1827 a small volume of poetry entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*. In 1828 the two brothers entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where Alfred gained the University Chancellor's gold medal for a poem on *Timbuctoo*, and where he formed an intimate friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam (son of the historian),

whose memory he has immortalised in *In Memoriam*. Among his other Cambridge friends may be mentioned R. C. Trench (afterwards Archbishop of Dublin), Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton), J. M. Kemble (the Anglo-Saxon scholar), Merivale (the historian, afterwards Dean of Ely), James Spedding, and W. H. Brookfield. In 1830 Tennyson published his *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*, among which are to be found some sixty pieces that are preserved in the present issues of his works. In 1832 *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* appeared, and then, after an interval of ten years, two more volumes, also with the title *Poems*. His reputation as a poet was now established, though his greatest works were yet to come. Chief among these are *The Princess* (1847), *In Memoriam* (1850), *Maud* (1855), *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885), and *Enoch Arden* (1864). In 1875 Tennyson published his first drama, *Queen Mary*, followed by *Harold* (1877), *The Cup* (acted in 1881), *The Promise of May* (1882), *The Falcon*, and *Becket* (1884). On the death of Wordsworth in 1850, Tennyson succeeded him as Poet Laureate. In 1884, he was gazetted Baron of Aldworth and Farringford, his two seats in Sussex and in the Isle of Wight. He died on October 6th, 1892.

I. Of all modern English poets Tennyson has most readers: the chief elements of the powerful charm which he exercises over the hearts and minds of all English speaking peoples will be evident on even a brief survey of the character of his mind as revealed in his works, and of the form and matter of his verse. At the basis of all Tennyson's teaching, indeed of all his work, is Tennyson the man. The mould of a poet's mind is the mould in which his thoughts and even his modes of

expression must run, and the works of a poet cannot be fully understood unless we understand the poet himself

1 Conspicuous among the main currents of thought and feeling that flow through the body of his writings is his perception of the movement of Law throughout the worlds of sense and of spirit he recognises therein a settled scheme of great purposes underlying a universal order and gradually developing to completion

(a) Illustrations of this recognition of pervading Law may be found in his conception of Nature, and in his treatment of human action and of natural scenery Nature, which to Shelley was a spirit of Love, and to Wordsworth a living and speaking presence of Thought, is to Tennyson a process of Law including both Even in the midst of his mourning over the seeming waste involved in the early death of his friend, he can write in *In Memoriam*

I curse not Nature, no, nor death,
For nothing is that errs from law

In all the workings of Nature he traces the evolution of the great designs of God—

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far off divine event
To which the whole creation moves

In *The Higher Pantheism*, a similar thought is found

God is law, say the wise, O soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law, the thunder is yet His voice

(b) Allied to this faith that the universe is "roll'd round by one fixt law" is the poet's sympathy with disciplined

(1) His sense
of Law

shown in his
conceptions
(a) of Nature,

(b) of Freedom,

order in the various spheres of human action In politics his ideal Freedom is "sober suited", it is such a Freedom as has been evolved by the gradual growth of English institutions, a Freedom which

slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent

He has small faith in sudden outbursts of revolutionary fervour, he thinks that the "red fool fury of the Seine," the "flashing heats" of the "frantic city," retard man's progress towards real liberty they "but fire to blast the hopes of men" If liberty is to be a solid and lasting possession, it must be gained by patient years of working and waiting, not by "Raw Haste, half sister of Delay" So also Tennyson's love for his own country is regulated and philosophic he has given us a few patriotic martial lyrics that stir the living blood "like a trumpet call," as *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *The Revenge*, but in the main his patriotism is founded on admiration for the great "storied past" of England Though in youth he triumphs in "the Vision of the world and all the wonder that would be," yet neither in youth nor in age is he himself without some sympathy with a distrust of the new democratic forces which may end in "working their own doom "

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe, known
to all,

Step by step we rose to greatness—thro' the tonguesters we
may fall

(c) Again, in his conception of the passion of Love, and in his portraiture of Womanhood, the same spirit of reverence and self-control animates Tennyson's verse Love,

in Tennyson, is a pure unselfish passion. Even the guilty love of Lancelot and Guinevere is described from a spiritual standpoint, in its evil effects rather than in its sensuous details. His highest ideal of love is found in the pure passion of wedded life. true love can exist only under the sanction of Duty and of reverence for womanhood and one's higher self, and such love is the source of man's loftiest ideas, and inspires his noblest deeds.

(d) Lastly, Tennyson's appreciation of Order is illustrated in his treatment of natural scenery. He gives us scenes of savage grandeur, as in

the monstrous ledges slope and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water smoke,

but he oftener describes still English landscapes, the "homes of ancient peace," with "planted alleys" and "terrace-lawn," "long, gray fields," "tracts of pasture sunny warm," and all the ordered quiet of rural life.

2 A second great element of Tennyson's character is its noble tone. This pervades every poem he has ever written. His verse is informed with the very spirit of Honour, of Duty, and of Reverence for all that is pure and true. ^{(2) His nobility of thought.}

3 Another main characteristic of Tennyson is simplicity. The emotions that he appeals to are generally easy to understand and common to all. He avoids the subtle analysis of character, and the painting of complex motives or of the wild excess of passion. The moral laws which he so strongly upholds are those primary sanctions upon which average English society is founded. A certain Puritan simplicity and a scholarly restraint pervade the mass of his work. ^{(3) His simplicity of emotion.}

It is on these foundations of Order, Nobility, and Simplicity that Tennyson's character is built

II. Turning now to the matter or substance of his poems, we note, first, that the two chief factors of Tennyson's popularity are that he is a representative English poet, and that he is a consummate Artist

In the great spheres of human thought—in religion, in morals, in social life—his poems reflect the complex tendencies of his age and his surroundings. Not, it may be, the most advanced ideas, not the latest speculation, not the transient contentions of the hour, but the broad results of culture and experience upon the poet's English contemporaries. The ground of Tennyson's claim to be considered a representative of his age is seen in the lines of thought pursued in some of those more important poems which deal with the great problems and paramount interests of his times. The poems cover a period of fifty years, and must be considered in the order of their publication. In *Locksley Hall*, published in 1842, the speaker, after giving vent to his own tale of passion and regret, becomes the mouth-piece of the young hopes and aspirations of the Liberalism of the early Victorian era, while in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, the doubts and distrust felt by the Conservatism of our own times find dramatic utterance. *The Princess* deals with a question of lasting interest to society, and one which has of late years risen into more conspicuous importance, the changing position and proper sphere of Woman. In *The Palace of Art* the poet describes and condemns a spirit of æstheticism whose sole religion is the worship of Beauty and Knowledge for their own sakes, and which ignores human

responsibility and obligations to one's fellow men while in *St Simcon Stylites*, the poet equally condemns the evils of a self-centred religious asceticism which despises the active duties of daily life. *The Vision of Sin* is a picture of the perversion of nature and of the final despair which attend the pursuit of sensual pleasure. *The Two Voices* illustrates the introspective self-analysis with which the age discusses the fundamental problem of existence, finding all solutions vain except those dictated by the simplest voices of the conscience and the heart. The poet's great work, *In Memoriam*, is the history of a tender human soul confronted with the stern, relentless order of the Universe and the seeming waste and cruelty of Death. The poem traces the progress of sorrow from the Valley of Death, over-shadowed by the darkness of unspeakable loss, through the regions of philosophic doubt and meditation to the serene heights of resignation and hope, where Faith and Love can triumph over Death in the confident hope of a life beyond, and over Doubt by the realisation

That all, as in some piece of art,
Is toil coöperant to an end

Maul is dated at the conclusion of that long period of peace which preceded the Crimean War, when the commercial prosperity of England had reached a height unknown before, and when "Britain's sole god" was the millionaire. The poem gives a dramatic rendering of the revolt of a cultured mind against the hypocrisy and corruptions of a society degraded by the worship of Mammon, though the hero inherits a vein of insanity

and speaks too bitterly. The teaching of Tennyson's longest, and in many respects greatest, poem—the spreading mischief of a moral taint—is discussed at length in the Introduction to *The Coming of Arthur and the Passing of Arthur*¹. Here too Tennyson expresses one of the deepest convictions of his time.

But if Tennyson's popularity is based upon a correspondence between his own reverence for Law and the deepest foundations of English character, it is based no less upon his delicate power as an Artist. Among the elements of this power may be mentioned a minute observation of Nature which furnishes him with a store of poetic description and imagery, a scholarly appreciation of all that is most picturesque in the literature of the past, an exquisite precision in the use of words and phrases, an avoidance of the commonplace, the expressive harmonies of his rhythm and the subtle melody of his diction.

(a) For minute observation and vivid painting of the details of natural scenery Tennyson is without a rival. We feel that he has seen all that he describes. This may be illustrated by a few examples of his tree studies —

hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides three fold to show the fruit within
(*The Brook*)

those eyes
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of March
(*The Gardener's Daughter*)

¹ Macmillan and Co

With blasts that blow the poplar white
(*In Memoriam*)

A million emeralds break from the ruby budded lime
(*Maud*)

a stump of oak half dead,
From roots like some black coil of carven snakes,
Clutch'd at the crag (*The Last Tournament*)

We may also notice the exactness of the epithets in "perky larches," "dry tongu'd laurels," "pillar'd dusk of sounding sycamores," "laburnums, dropping wells of fire"

Equally exact are his descriptions of scientific phenomena —

Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course till thou wert also man (*The Two Voices*)

Still, as while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring (*The Palace of Art*)

This accurate realisation of scientific facts is often of service in furnishing apt illustrations of moral truths or of emotions of the mind —

Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears
That grief has shaken into frost (*In Memoriam*)

Prayer, from a living source within the will,
And beating up through all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea
(*Enoch Arden*)

(b) Allusions to the Classics of more than one land may be found in Tennyson. Lines and expressions would seem sometimes to be suggested by the Greek or

(b) His scholarship

Latin poets, and in these the translation is generally so happy a rendering of the original as to give an added grace to what was already beautiful. Illustrations of this characteristic will be found among the Notes at the end of this volume. There is occasionally a reconditeness about these allusions which may puzzle the general reader. For example, in the lines

And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo (*In Memoriam*)

where the reference is to the projection of the frontal bone above the eye brows noticeable in the portraits of Michael Angelo and of Arthur Hallam, a peculiarity of shape said to indicate strength of character and mental power. Similarly in

Proxy wedded with a bootless calf (*The Princess*)

we find an allusion to an old ceremony of marriage by proxy, where an ambassador or agent representing the absent bridegroom, after taking off his boot, placed his leg in the bridal bed.

(c) We may next note Tennyson's unequalled power of finding single words to give at a flash, as it were, an exact picture. What he has written of Virgil's art is equally true of his own, which offers us

All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word.

This power of fitting the word to the thought may be seen in the following examples "creamy spray", "lily maid", "the ripple *washing* in the reeds" and "the

wild water *lapped* on the crag"; "the dying ebb that faintly *lapped* the flat red granite", "as the fiery Sirius *boiled* into red and emerald", "women *bleas'd* with health and wind and rain"

(d) Possessing such a faculty of appropriate expression, the poet naturally avoids the commonplace. Tennyson ^{(d) His avoidance of commonplace.} not only rigidly excludes all otiose epithets and stop-gap phrases, but often, where other writers would use some familiar, well worn word, he selects one less known but equally true and expressive. He has a distinct fondness for good old Saxon words and expressions, and has helped to rescue many of these from undeserved oblivion. Thus, for the "skunkflint" of common parlance he substitutes (in *Walsingham to the Maid*) the "flayflint" of Ray's *Proverbs*, in place of "blindman's buff" is found the older "hoodman blind" (*In Memoriam*), for "village and cowshed" he writes "thorpe and byre" (*The Tithing*), while in *The Brook* the French "cricket" appears as the Saxon "grig". Other examples might be quoted, *e.g.*, *lurdane*, *rathe*, *glash*, *brewis*, *thwall'd*, *boles*, *quitch*, *recling*, *relq*, *wythgate*. Occasionally he prefers a word of his own coinage, as *lonquester selfless*. This tendency to avoid the commonplace is noticeable not only in separate words, but in the rendering of ideas, a poetic dress being given to prosaic details by a kind of stately circumlocution: thus in *The Princess* the hero's northern birthplace is indicated by his telling us that "on my cradle shone the Northern star", and to describe the hour before the planet Venus had sunk into the sea, the poet writes

Before the crimson circled star
Had fall'n into her father's grave

(c) Lastly, if we examine the metrical characteristics of Tennyson's poetry, we observe that the sense of majestic order and gradual development pervading the substance of his poems is not more conspicuous than is the sense of music which governs the style of his versification. He knows all the secrets of harmonious rhythm and melodious diction, he has re-cast and polished his earlier poems with such minute and scrupulous care that he has at length attained a metrical form more perfect than has been reached by any other poet. Several illustrations of the delicacy of his sense of metre are pointed out in the Notes. A few more examples may be here quoted to show how frequently in his verse the sound echoes the sense. This is seen in his Representative Rhythms

(a) The first syllable or half-foot of a line of blank verse is often accented and cut off from the rest of the line by a pause, to indicate some sudden emphatic action or startling sight or sound, breaking the flow of the narrative

his arms
Clash'd and the sound was good to Gareth's ear
(Gareth and Lynette)

Charm'd, till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come *(Ib)*

Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive
(Lancelot and Elaine)

Flash'd, and he call'd, 'I fight upon thy side'
(Pellcas and Etlarre)

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the leaf *(Ib)*

Fall, as the crest of some slow arching wave
Drops flat
(The Last Tournament)

Tennyson's sense of music is equally conspicuous in the melody of his diction. The mere sound of his words and phrases lingers in the brain, apart from any meaning, as the echoes of a musical cadence linger along a vaulted roof. This is in the main due to his selection of melodious vowels and liquid consonants, and also to his skilful use of alliteration. Examples are everywhere.

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees (The Princess)

As 'twere a hundred throated nightingale,
The strong tempestuous treble throbb'd and palpitated
(The Vision of Sin)

The long low dune and lazy plunging sea
(*The Last Tournament*)

Breast-high in that bright line of bracken stood
(Pellens and Earre)

All day the wind breathes *loir* with mellowed tone
Through every hollow cave and alley lone
(*The Lotus Eaters*)

In double words initial alliteration is conspicuous — “breaker-beaten,” “flesh-fall’n,” “gloomy-gladed,” “lady-laden,” “mock meek,” “point-painted,” “rain-rotten,” “storm-strengthen’d,” “tongue-torn,” “work-wan” We also find “slowly-mellowing” “hollower-bellowing,” “ever-veering,” “heavy shotted hammock-shroud” In no English poet, perhaps only in Homer and Virgil, is this kinship of poetry and music so evident as in Tennyson

Such is Tennyson, and such his lyric and his narrative Conclusion.
poetry. In these lies his strength. His three historical dramas, *Harold*, *Becket*, and *Queen Mary*, are full of deep research and vivid character-painting. *Queen Mary*, *Becket*, *The Cup*, *The Falcon*, *The Promise of May*, and *The Foresters* have been placed on the stage¹. His lyrical poems, his *In Memoriam*, and his *Idylls*, have become an integral part of the literature of the world, and so long as purity and loftiness of thought expressed in perfect form have power to charm, will remain a possession for ever.

¹ *The Cup* and *The Falcon* were each played during a London season to full houses. G. H. Lewes often said that Tennyson's plays would, if arranged, be preeminently fitted for the stage, and that he was sure the public in the future would not be slow to recognise the many magnificent situations that occur throughout his dramatic works. It is interesting to remember that Robert Browning used to point out the scene of the oath over the saint's bones in *Harold*, as a marvellously actable scene, and that he expressed his admiration of the dramatic qualities of *Queen Mary*.

INTRODUCTION TO IDYLLS OF THE KING

Cycles of Romance—King Arthur in History—Arthurian Cycle in English Literature—Arthurian Cycle in Tennyson's Poems—The title "Idylls"—Spiritual significance of the *Idylls of the King*—The *Idylls* not a mere Allegory—Anachronism—The Ideal Arthur—The *Idylls* completed—Unity of design—Significance of individual Idylls

Two great kings, Arthur of England and Charlemagne of France, were made in the middle ages the centres of two great cycles or systems of Romance. Each cycle presented its king as the visible head of Christendom, and arrayed around him a fellowship of knights. The chief of these knights was in each cycle distinguished above his fellows, and made the type of manly valour and chivalric virtue, Lancelot, 'the flower of chivalry' of Arthur's Round Table, corresponding to Orlando (or Roland), the chief of Charlemagne's Paladins. So also Guinevere, 'the pearl of beauty' in Arthur's court, has her counterpart in her whom Milton (*Par. Reg.* iii. 341) calls

Arthurian and
Carlovingian
Cycles of
Romance

The fairest of her sex, Angelica,
saught by many prowdest knights,
Both Paynim and the peers of Charlemain

Common to both cycles are the ideas of far spreading conquest and of unity of empire under a single head,

Charlemagne's historical annexations being paralleled by a mythical expedition of Arthur, which reached as far as Rome, and brought the capital of the West under his sway. And the career of Charlemagne, like that of Arthur, ends in mystery, as Arthur (according to the legendary epitaph on his tomb at Glastonbury, 'Hic jacet Arturus rex quondam rexque futurus') passes 'to come again,' so Charlemagne is described as sitting in Odenberg, crowned and armed, till the time of his second coming to deliver Christendom from Antichrist. The resemblance of the two cycles runs into a number of minor details: in both the chief knight passes through a prolonged term of madness, and even the magic brand *Excalibur* has its match in Charlemagne's famous sword *Durindana*.

Moreover, the moral systems of the two cycles are closely allied. In each

Shine martial Faith and Courtesy's clear star,

and in each "noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke" (Caxton's Preface to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*). Such difference of teaching as is to be noticed between the two cycles may be due in great part to the different channels through which they have come down to us. Ariosto and Bojardo, the Italian romancists, in whose pages we now read the Carolingian story, gave the brilliant and vivid colour of their own times, and of the civilization of the later middle age, to the rude material they found

in the early legends Malory, the compiler of the English *Morte d'Arthur*, brings us into closer and fresher contact with the original form and spirit of the ancient legends. Thus we find that the Romance of the Round Table, far ruder as a work of skill than the Italian presentment of Charlemagne and his Paladins, has more of the simplicity and inconsistency of childhood, the ascetic element is more strongly and quantly developed, it presents a higher conception of the nature of woman, a more distinct sense of sin, and a broader, more manly view of human life and duty.

The mythical tales that have gathered round the name of Charlemagne deal with a personage whose conquests are matters of authentic history, but regarding Arthur little of real fact has been ascertained, all that modern research can tell us with any certainty is that there was in the sixth century a war-leader in Britain called Artus or Arthur, who, after the departure of the Romans, headed the tribes of Cumbria and Strathclyde (the old divisions of Western Britain, stretching from the Severn to the Clyde) against the encroaching Saxons from the east and the Picts and Scots from the north, and that five or six centuries later "the name of King Arthur had come to stand for an ideal of royal wisdom, chivalric virtue, and knightly prowess which was recognised alike in England, France, and Germany."

The Arthurian cycle has afforded materials for many romancists and poets, both English and foreign. Its development in English literature may be clearly traced.

The earliest legends of Arthur are to be found in the *Welsh Tales*, in the Breton and German *Romances*, and

King Arthur
in History

The Arthurian
Cycle in
English
Literature.

in *Chronicles* such as that of St Gildas de Ruys, *De Excidio Britanniae*

Between 1130 and 1147 Geoffrey of Monmouth, "the veracious Geoffrey," gave a long account of Arthur's exploits in his *Historia Britonum*, a fabulous Latin chronicle of the Cymry and their kings. The popularity of this History gave a new currency to the stories. Geoffrey's work was turned into French verse by Gaimar, and also, with many additional details about Arthur, by Wace, a Jersey poet. The legends up to this point recounted deeds of mere animal courage and passion.

About 1196 Walter Map (or Mapes), a chaplain to Henry II, and subsequently Archdeacon of Oxford, gave spiritual life to the whole system of Arthurian romance by blending with it the legend of the *Quest of the Holy Graal*. The 'Holy Graal' (or Grail, as Tennyson spells it) was, we are told, the cup or dish used by Christ at the Last Supper, and subsequently by Joseph of Arimathea to catch the blood of Christ as He was hanging wounded on the cross. The word *grail*, old French *graal*, low Latin *gradale*, is allied to the Greek *κρητήρ*, a cup. The derivation of *Sancgraal*, from *Sanguis realis* (= the *real blood* of Christ), is erroneous, and arose from a wrong spelling and division of letters, *sancgraal* being mistakenly written *san qrael*, and then *sang real*. Joseph brought the dish with him to Glastonbury, in England, where it was lost,* the search for it, the

* There is still preserved in the cathedral of Genoa a hexagonal dish, of the colour and brilliance of emerald, it is called *Sacro Catino*, and local traditions maintain that this is the original *grail*.

'Quest of the Holy Grail,' was undertaken by many of the knights of the Round Table, and to some of them a sight of it, accompanied by the holy sacrament and the Real Presence of Christ, was granted. The legend thus became an allegory of a man's striving after a perfect knowledge of Truth and of God, to be gained only by a life of ideal purity. (See Tennyson's *Idyll of The Holy Grail*.) From the introduction of the Grail legend we must date the elevation of King Arthur to the place he has since held as a Christian monarch ruling over an essentially religious people.

In 1470 Sir Thomas Malory (or 'Malleor,' as Tennyson calls him) used the materials he found in "many noble volumes; in Welsh be many and also in French and some in English" for the making of his "book of King Arthur and of his noble knights of the Round Table." The book is called by Caxton, who printed it in 1485, "this noble and Joyous book entytled le Morte Darthur", and in his preface thereto the printer says that it contains "many joyous and pleasant histories and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness and chivalry." Malory's book is for the modern reader the most accessible and best known storehouse of Arthurian legend. Upon this Tennyson has founded some of his *Idylls of the King*. The closeness with which the poet has in many instances followed his original is illustrated by the parallel passages quoted from Malory in the Notes at the end of this volume.

Other poets have taken, or thought of taking, Arthur as the central hero of their chief work. Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene*, makes 'Prince Arthure' the type of 'magnificence,' i.e. 'noble doing', and under the figure

of Arthure's knights represents the various virtues striving heavenwards and helped on their way by their Prince

Milton originally intended to take as the heroes of a great national epic—

indigenas reges
Artiumque etiam sub terris bella moventem.

but, sharing the common doubt of most writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as to "who he was and whether any such reigned in history," rejected the *Round Table* as a subject in favour of the Loss of Paradise.

Blackmore wrote two epics—*Prince Arthur*, in ten books, and *King Arthur*, in twelve books.

Dryden produced a dramatic opera which he entitled *King Arthur*, but it was really nothing more than an allegory of the events of the reign of Charles II. In his *Essay on Satire* he gives a melancholy account of a projected epic, with either King Arthur or Edward the Black Prince as hero. In allusion to these writers, Sir Walter Scott, in his *Introduction to Marmion*, tells how the "mightiest chiefs of British song" felt the fascination of the Arthurian legends—

They glean through Spenser's elfin dream,
And mix in Milton's heavenly theme,
And Dryden, in immortal strain
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a rihald king and court
Bade him toil on to make them sport

Scott himself felt a similar attraction towards this "ancient minstrel strain." He edited, with notes, Thomas the Rhymer's metrical romance, *Sir Tristrem*,

and introduced into his own *Bridal of Triermaine* a story of King Arthur's love for a fairy princess

In 1838 Lady Charlotte Guest published *The Mabinogion*, a translation into English of the Welsh legends contained in "the red book of Heigerst," which is in the library of Jesus College, Oxford. From the *Mabinogion* Tennyson has taken the story of his Idyll of *Geraint and Enid*.

In 1848 Bulwer-Lytton produced an epic, in six-lined stanzas, entitled *King Arthur*.

On Tennyson the Arthurian Romance began, very early in his life, to exercise a strong fascination. We are told that, when quite a boy, he chanced upon a copy of Malory's book, and often with his brothers held mimic tournaments after the fashion of knights of the Round Table. So early as 1832 he published *The Lady of Shalott*, the incidents of which afterwards formed the framework of the Idyll of *Elaine*. Ten years later his *Morte d'Arthur* appeared, an introduction to this poem represented it as a fragment of a long epic, all the rest of which, as being "faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth," the author had thrown into the fire. Five years previously to this publication Walter Savage Landor, who had heard the *Morte d'Arthur* read aloud from manuscript, wrote "It is more Homeric than any poem of our time, and rivals some of the noblest poetry in the *Odyssey*." Two shorter Arthurian poems, *Sir Galahad* and *Lancelot and Guinevere*, were contained in the same volume with *Morte d'Arthur*. The first issue of *Idylls of the King*, comprising only four Idylls—*Enid*, *Fivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*—appeared in 1859. The remaining Idylls were published at intervals between 1869 and 1872, with the exception of *Balin and Balan*,

The Arthurian
Cycle in
Tennyson's
Poems.

'an introduction to *Merlin and Vivien*,' contained with other poems in a volume given to the world in 1885. The original fragment, *Monte d'Arthur*, now forms part of the last Idyll, *The Passing of Arthur*.

'Idyll,' from εἶδος, εἰδύλλιοι, 'a little picture,' was the title originally used in Greek Literature for short picturesque poems, such as the Idylls of Theocritus the Sicilian (B.C. 280), these generally depict common incidents in the life of simple folk in country or in town—the loves and jealousies of shepherds, the toils of fishermen, or sight-seeings in a great city. Later imitators of Theocritus (Vergil, for example) took rural life almost exclusively as the scenery of their Idylls. Hence 'idyllic' is now generally understood as implying an idealised rusticity, the simplicity of the country without its coarseness. So Tennyson calls the shepherd love song, quoted by Id. 1 in *The Princess*, "a small sweet idyl,"¹ and has given the title of "English Idylls" to poems like his *Dona*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, and *Sea Dreams*. But the term 'Idyll' may rightly be used of any 'picture poem,' that is, a poem which gives a highly wrought and complete representation of any scene of life and has for motive one leading sentiment. The *Idylls of the King* are not pastoral poems—they are of a loftier and nobler strain and are informed with a more serious purpose. Each *Idyll* is complete in itself as presenting a separate picture, but each at the same time fills its place in a con-

¹The old spelling was *idyl*, with one *l*. The double *l*, which better recalls the Greek original, served when first adopted to distinguish heroic descriptive poems from pastorals like those of Theocritus. This distinction is no longer observed, the modern spelling *idyll* being in general use.

nected series grouped round a central figure. The twelve books of the *Idylls of the King* form one great Poem, characterised by Epic unity of design and grandeur of tone: they present a full cycle of heroic story and have a rightful claim to be known as the "Epic of Arthur."

The spiritual significance which is seen to be so "deeply interfused" through this great poem, now that it can be studied as a completed work of art, was naturally not so evident in the detached instalments first published. They were regarded as "rich pictorial fancies taken, certainly not at random, but without any really coherent design, out of a great magazine of romantic story" (Hutton, *Literary Essays*), and were read with delight for their "exquisite magnificence of style," as Swinburne calls it, the elaborate melody of rhythm, the richness and truth of illustration, and the grandeur of tone that marked them. And, indeed, apart from any secondary significance which they are meant to contain, the lover of poetry and romance will always feel the intrinsic charm both in the form and in the substance of these tales of "wonder and woe, of amorous devotion and fierce conflict and celestial vision." It is for the story and the style that each Idyll should first be read, their 'moral' is best reserved for separate, subsequent consideration. Accordingly, the reader of this volume has in the Notes been referred to this Introduction for explanation of any significance deeper than that which is evident on the surface of the poems. This significance is never obtruded by the poet, and it is only in his epilogue *To the Queen* that he tells us of the grand moral purpose which is now recognised as clearly

The spiritual
significance of
the *Idylls of
the King*

and consistently running through the whole set of *Idylls*. He there describes the work as—

an old imperfect tale,
New old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul,
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man shaped, from mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still, or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Mallor's, one
Touch'd by the adulous finger of a time
That hover'd between war and wantonness,
And crownings and dethronements

The King Arthur of the *Idylls* is something more than a model of kingly virtue and knightly prowess, and the story of the founding and the dissolution of the Round Table is not solely a narrative of romantic adventure, and of the loves, the passions, and the sins of knights and ladies. These *Idylls* reflect the eternal struggle in the life of mankind of good against evil, of the spiritual against the sensual element of our nature, that conflict which St Paul (Bible, *Rom* vii 13) describes as the law in our members warring against the law of our mind. A personal friend of the poet's, Mrs Thackeray Ritchie, daughter of Thackeray, himself also an intimate friend of Tennyson's, has written as follows regarding the scope of the *Idylls* "If *In Memoriam* is the record of a human soul, the *Idylls* mean the history, not of one man or of one generation, but of a whole cycle, of the faith of a nation failing and falling away into darkness. 'It is the dream of man coming into practical life, and ruined by one sin' Birth is a mystery, and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the table-land of life, and its struggle and performance" The *Idylls* them-

themselves are not devoid of definite, outspoken testimony to their own inner meaning. In *Guinevere* Arthur himself recounts how on founding the Order of the Round Table he made his knights swear

"To reverence the king, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their king,"

and later in the same Idyll the repentant queen, recognising at last the height of Arthur's purity, cries

"Ah, great and gentle lord
Who wiest, as if the conscience of a saint
Among his warrior senses, to thy knights."

Yet the poem is not a mere allegory. Arthur and his knights and the ladies of his court are not abstractions of ideal qualities—they are real men and women, with human feelings and trials and conflicts—they do represent and embody certain virtues and vices, but these qualities work and live in them work and then lives. Some purely allegorical figures are, indeed, introduced, as that of the Lady of the Lake personifying Religion, and in the visions of Percival in *The Holy Grail* there is more of symbolism than reality. But these figures and visions are clearly distinct from the human *personæ* of the stories.

Arthur, then, is a man in whom the higher instincts of his nature dominate the lower, and whose whole life is governed by the law within. He is, as Guinevere too late acknowledges, "the highest and most human too." The kingdom which "for a space" he establishes, and which in spite of downfall he will come to establish again, is the rule of conscience, and in his coming, his

*The Idylls not
a mere
allegory*

foundation of the Round Table "for love of God and men," his continued endeavour to keep his knights true to their vows, his failure, and his mysterious passing which is not death, we see a reflection of the conflict eternally waged in human life between the spirit and the flesh "with the lusts thereof" Arthur's visible enemies are the heathen, whom he overcomes, but more subtle foes than the heathen are the evil passions and the mystic delusions of his own Christian court and household, which in the end prevail over and ruin his "boundless purpose"

Tennyson's disavowal of an historical intention such as is characteristic of the true Epic, has been quoted above. Indeed, the legends themselves, as read in Malory's book, make no pretence to chronological truth even Malory's setting of the stories belongs to times near his own rather than to the times which he tells of, to the age of chivalry and the Crusades rather than to the rude simplicity of the real Arthur's era, to the twelfth rather than to the sixth century. The author of the *Idylls* in his turn has gone still further, and while preserving from Malory the scenic accessories of tilt and tournament and heraldic device, as well as the chivalric virtues of courtesy and reverence for womanhood, has placed the court of Arthur in a mental and moral atmosphere not far remote from that in which the poet's own contemporaries move. As the pomp and circumstance and the refinement of chivalry in Malory's compilation are foreign to the times of the ancient British war leader, so the self-questioning of Tristram and the philosophies of Dagonet, for example, in *The Last Tournament*, are a development quite beyond the purview of Malory's times.

Tennyson has taken the dim personages of the early annals, surrounded as he found them in Malory by the romantic glamour and mysticism of a later age, and has idealised them still further to suit his own poetic purpose and the advanced thought of the nineteenth century

It must not, however, be forgotten that the idea of Arthur as a type of half-divine manhood and supreme kingliness is no invention of Tennyson's "Flos Regum Arturius," Arthur the Flower of Kings, the motto prefixed to the *Idylls*, is a phrase from the old chronicler, Joseph of Exeter, who also writes, "The old world knows not his peer, nor will the future show us his equal he alone towers over all other kings, better than the past ones, and greater than those that are to be" Caxton, in his preface to Malory's *Monte Dathanu*, uses similar language "For in all places, Christian and heathen, he is taken for one of the nine worthy, and the first of the three Christian men" This halo of spiritual glory is, both in the Chronicles and in Malory's book, crossed and blurred by sin and shame, but such a stigma is inconsistent with the ideal perfection also ascribed to Arthur's character, and even in Malory's presentment it leaves no taint on the king's later career After the elevation of the older stories, by the blending with them of the Christian mysticism of the Sangreal legends, the unearthly excellence of the king is the stronger element, and over-rules the admixture of crime and retribution

It is this view of Arthur that Tennyson has adopted, and it was necessary to reject the inconsistent evil before any coherent design of the character could be formed for

The ideal
Arthur an
original con-
ception of
the old
chroniclers

Tennyson's
development
of the ideal
character of
Arthur

the purpose of a modern *Arthurian*. The "pure severity of perfect light" in which the faultless king of Tennyson's *Idylls* moves, as in his proper element, is the natural development of the loftier spirit infused in the tenth century into the old Chroniclers' conception of Arthur's character the new leaven was bound to work until it had leavened the whole lump

The *Idylls of the King* as now published comprise the *Dedication* to the Prince Consort

Hereafter through all times Albion the Good—

—*The Coming of Arthur*—ten *Idylls* grouped together under the general title of *The Round Table*—*The Passing of Arthur* and an epilogue *To the Queen*. The first *Idyll* and the last are thus separated from the ten intermediate poems, and deal, the one with the birth of Arthur and his founding of the great Order, and the other with the king's last battle and his passing from earth. They thus differ in subject from the *Idylls* treating of Arthur's knights and the ladies of his court, and this difference is marked in their style, which is intentionally archaic.

Yet the unity of design of the whole series of *Idylls* clearly appears. It is seen not only in the gradually developed story of one great sin and its spreading taint, but also in incidental features. Thus the story in its course runs through the seasons of one complete year, the phases of Nature in their succession forming a background for the successive scenes of the poem. In *The Coming of Arthur* we read that it was on the "night of the new year" that Arthur was born. Gareth, in the next *Idyll*, starts on his quest of glory at the dawn of a

spring morning, the melody of birds sounds around him, and under foot

The live green had kindled into flowers,
For it was past the time of Easterday

The marriage of Arthur and Guinevere (described in *The Coming of Arthur*) takes place amid the flowers in May. In *The Marriage of Geraint* and its continuation, *Geraint and Enid*, the action of the characters begins "on a summer morn," and later in the poem we come to the mowers at work, while the sun blazes on the turning scythe. Summer is further advanced in *Balin and Balan* and in *Merlin and Vivien* at the outset Merlin, as he crosses the fields, is "foot-gilt" with "blossom-dust," and in the concluding scene a summer tempest breaks overhead. In *Lancelot and Elaine* the blossoming meadow has given place to a field that "shone full-summer," and we read of "the casement standing wide for heat." The summer is not yet past in the next two Idylls it is "on a summer night" that the vision of the Holy Grail appears to the assembled knights. *Pelleas and Etanne* is the last of the summer Idylls the sun beats "like a strong man" on the young knight's helm, and, later, we have the mellow moon and the roses of the waning season. In *The Last Tournament* autumn, with its "yellowing woods" and "withered leaf," succeeds, and the scene closes "all in a death-dumb, autumn-dripping gloom." The last of the *Round Table* Idylls shows us Guinevere's flight at a time when the white mist of early winter clings to the dead earth. And, finally, the last weird battle in *The Passing of Arthur* is fought

when the great light of heaven
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year

INTRODUCTION TO

The wounded king is carried at midnight across rocks covered with the ice of the dead of winter, and he passes away from earth when the mystic year has rolled full circle. The "new Sun" now rises to usher in a "new year," and a different era.

The old order changeth, yielding place to new

The more particular significance of the incidents and characters in the first Idyll, *The Coming of Arthur*, may now be considered. The mystery of Arthur's birth points to the searchings of heart, the difficulties, and the doubts which ever accompany any human conception of the origin of spiritual authority and of duty, and the different views taken of that mystery aptly represent the varieties of soil upon which the seed of any new gospel must fall. Some will always be found who talk and act in direct opposition to him who would lead them to higher things, and to say, as the scribes of Jerusalem said of Christ, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils" —

For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet
And theirs are bestial, call him less than man

In contrast with such base minded foes we have the dreamy belief of the spiritually minded mystic —

And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream him dropp'd from heaven,

—for the mystic is always "seeking for a sign," and prone to look for the immediate interposition of supernatural agency

Another class of minds, which may be placed midway between the base opponents and the mystic believers, is

represented by Bedivere. This honest knight troubles himself but little with doubts or portents, and sees no reason to question or prove the truth of a message which comes to him with the sanction of common sense and at the same time satisfies his own ideal. His recognition of the significance of the message and its higher aspects may be dim and partial, but his obedience is thorough and practical. To this class also Bellicent belongs although, woman-like, she feels a curiosity which she asks Merlin to satisfy regarding the reported wonders of

The sluning dragon and the naked child,
yet speaking of the king to her son she says that she
doubted him

No more than he himself

In the Coronation scene many of the details have a distinctly symbolic reference. The "three fair queens," with the light from the pictured cross falling upon them, probably typify the three Christian virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity. Mage Merlin, "who knew the range of all their arts," may aptly symbolize the Intellect: his knowledge ranges over all human philosophy, but, as his fate, described in *Merlin and Vivien*, shows, it is knowledge without moral restraint or spiritual strength.

The Lady of the Lake, who stands near Merlin, "knows a subtler magic than his own," inasmuch as the power of Religion* is based on deeper and stronger

* In the Idyll of *Gareth and Lynette* a description is given of a statue of the Lady of the Lake, standing on the keystone of a gate of Camelot: the figure is embellished with many Christian emblems: its arms are stretched out like a cross, drops of baptismal water flow from its hands, from which also hung a censer and a sword, and the "sacred fish" floats on its breast. The last

foundations than those of any philosophy that science can teach. She is clothed in white, the colour of purity; incense, the emblem of adoration, curls about her; her face is half hidden in the "dim religious light" of the holy place; her voice mingles with the hymns, and, like the voice of the great multitude saying Alleluia, heard by St. John in the Revelation, sounds "as the voice of many waters." Her dwelling is in eternal calm, where storms cannot reach her; and as our Lord walked on the Galilean waves and stilled their tumult, she can pass over the troubled waters of life and calm them with her footsteps.

The sword which she gives to Arthur is cross-hilted; see Note to *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 285. It is the "sword of the spirit," to be used against the superstitions and falsehoods of heathendom. Its jewelled ornament, like the Urim and Thammim of the Jewish high priest, is emblematic of mystic help and guidance from a heavenly source.

The inner significance of the poem is further illustrated by Merlin's riddling response to Bellicent's question and by Leodogran's dream about Arthur, both of which are treated of in the Notes; also by the "dark sayings from of old," which speak of the king, these represent the vague oracular forecasts which, after the advent of any of the world's great teachers, are often said to have gone before it.

emblem was one in use among the early Christians, noticing that the initial letters of the phrase, *Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτὴρ*, formed the word *ΙΧΘΥΣ*, fish, they adopted the word and the form of a fish as Christian symbols. These may be seen cut on tombs in the Catacombs of Rome.

Before proceeding to the secondary significance of *The Passing of Arthur*, it will be convenient to trace the development of the design of the poem through the intermediate group of Idylls

Spiritual
significance of
the "Round
Table" Idylls

In *Gareth and Lynette* the golden age of Arthur's reign is depicted, before the taint of moral poison in the sin of Lancelot and Guinevere has begun to be felt. The vows of utter hardihood, utter gentleness, utter faithfulness in love, and uttermost obedience to the king are loyally kept by the whole Order, and true chivalry flourishes in all its splendour. Gareth himself is full of the enthusiasm of youth and of eagerness to serve the true king, willing to accept the humblest duty for the sake of glory. His achievement, the deliverance of the captive of Castle Perilous, is something more than a specimen of the work of the Round Table in redressing human wrong: it is also an image in miniature of the "boundless purpose of the king," the deliverance of the soul from bondage to the flesh.

In *The Marriage of Geraint* and *Geraint and Enid*, which were originally printed as one Idyll, the taint of impurity first shows itself; suspicions of his wife's honour are bred in Geraint's mind by rumours of the queen's unfaithfulness.

In *Balin and Balan*, these rumours have gained greater currency and strength, and the final catastrophe, the death of the two brothers, is due to the shattering of their faith in Guinevere's purity.

The taint comes into clearer light in *Merlin and Vivien*. The "vast wit and hundred winters" of the great Enchanter, shrewdness and knowledge and long experience, unsupported by moral strength, are powerless to with-

INTRODUCTION TO

stand the seductions of fleshly lusts In these four Idylls the seeds of sin are sown

In the next, *Lancelot and Elaine*, the bitter fruit ripens the death of Elaine, the "simple heart and sweet," is directly due to Lancelot's false truth to his guilty passion for the queen

In *The Holy Grail* a new element of failure is introduced the knights, misled by vague dreams and mystic enthusiasm, desert the plain and practical duties of common life to "follow wandering fires," and true faith is lost in the delusions of superstition

Pellcas and Etarre shows us the pure and loyal trust of a young life turned to bitterness and despair by sad experience of the prevailing corruption

The triumph of the senses is complete in *The Last Tournament* Tristram, the victor in "The Tournament of the Dead Innocence," openly scoffs at the king and his vows, and the glory of the Round Table is no more one faithful follower is left to Arthur, and he is the court fool

In *Gunevere* we see that sin has done its work, and the smouldering scandal breaks and blazes before the people the Order is splintered into feuds, the realm falls to ruin, and Arthur goes forth to meet his mysterious doom

The concluding Idyll, *The Passing of Arthur*, tells of the last battle and the end of Arthur's earthly life The king's "sensuous frame is racked with pangs that conquer trust," but there is no lessening of fortitude, no weakening of will—

"Nay, God, my Christ, I pass but cannot die "
In the conflict that precedes the last dread hour confusion and "formless fear" may fall upon the soul

when it stands forlorn amid the wrecks of its lofty purposes, and prepares to face the unknown future. But though Arthur sees full well the failure of all the purposes of his throne, his faith is not shaken—he can still say

“King am I, whatsoever be their cry,”

and the last stroke with Excalibur, which slays a traitor, fitly crowns a life of kingly and knightly achievement. The lines which follow, from

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd,
down to

And on the mere the wailing died away,
formed the original fragment *Monte d'Arthur*. The symbolism in this portion of the Idyll is less prominent, and the story is told with Homeric simplicity and directness. Excalibur, when now no use remains for it on earth, is reclaimed by the Lady of the Lake, that it may equip the king in other regions, for the life and energy of the soul do not end when it passes from earth. The cries of triumphant acclaim, sounding from beyond the limit of the world, to welcome the wounded king to his isle of rest and healing, recall Leodogran's vision of the king standing crowned in heaven. Arthur's earthly realm may “reel back into the beast,” and his Round Table may be dissolved, but his purity is untarnished, his honour is without stain, and the ideal which he has striven to realize has lost none of its inward vitality and significance. As he passes from earth to “vanish into light,” he already gives a forecast of his return as the representative of the new chivalry, when he shall come

With all good things, and war shall be no more

THE COMING OF ARTHUR
AND
THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGFAN, the King of Camelhard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child ,
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Gunevere, and in her his one delight

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land ,
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness, 10
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all then petty pryncedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd

And thus the land of Camelhard was waste, 20
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the beast ,
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear

Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
 And wallow'd in the gardens of the King
 And ever and anon the wolf would steal
 The children and devour, but now and then,
 Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
 To human sucklings, and the children, housed
 In her foul den, there at then meat would growl, 30
 And mock their foster mother on four feet,
 Till, strughten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,
 Worse than the wolves And King Leodogran
 Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
 And Cesar's eagle then his brother king,
 Urien, assaul'd him last a heathen horde,
 Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
 And on the spike that split the mother's heart
 Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
 He knew not whither he should turn for aid 40

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
 Tho' not without an uproar made by those
 Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the King
 Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!
 For here between the man and beast we die'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
 But heard the call, and came and Guinevere
 Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass,
 But since he neither wore on helm or shield
 The golden symbol of his kingship, 50
 But rode a simple knight among his knights,
 And many of these in richer arms than he,
 She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
 One among many, tho' his face was bare
 But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
 Felt the light of her eyes into his life
 Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd

His tents beside the forest Then he drave
 The heathen , after, slew the beast, and fell'd
 The forest, letting in the sun, and made
 Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight
 And so return'd

For while he linger'd there,
 A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
 Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
 Flash'd forth and into war for most of these,
 Colleaguung with a score of petty kings,
 Made head against him, crying, ' Who is he
 That he should rule us ? who hath proven him
 King Uther's son ? for lo ! we look at him,
 And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
 Are like to those of Uther whom we knew
 This is the son of Gorlois, not the King ,
 This is the son of Anton, not the King '

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
 Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
 Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere ,
 And thinking as he rode, ' Her father said
 That there between the man and beast they die
 Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
 Up to my throne, and side by side with me ?
 What happiness to reign a lonely king,
 Vext ~~~~~ ye stars that shudder over me,
 O earth that soundest hollow under me,
 Vext with waste dreams ? for saving I be join'd
 To her that is the fairest under heaven,
 I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
 And cannot will my will, nor work my work
 Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
 Victor and lord But were I join'd with her,
 Then might we live together as one life,

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale—
When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in hush day the morning star
So when the King had set his banner broad, 100
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,
And shouts, and clarions shuiling unto blood,
The long lanced battle let their horses run
And now the Barons and the kings prevail'd,
And now the King, as here and there that war
Went swaying, but the Powers who walk the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,
And mightier of his hands with every blow,
And leading all his knight-hood threw the kings 110
Carlo, Urien, Cradle-mont of Wales,
Cludras, and Clariance of Northumberland,
The King Brandagoras of Latngor,
With Angwant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees,
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep they swerved and brake
Flying and Arthur call'd to stay the brands
That he'd among the fivers, 'Ho! they yield' 120
As if a painted battle the war stood
Sidelong the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord
He laugh'd up in his armor whom he loved
And forward met 'Then dost not doubt me King,

So well thine arm hath wrought for me to day'
 'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
 Descends upon thee in the battle-field
 I know thee for my King!' Whereat the two,
 For each had warded either in the fight, 130
 'Swore on the field of death a deathless love.
 And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man' }
 Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death,' }

Then quickly from the foughthen field he sent
 Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
 His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
 Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,
 Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
 Debating—'How should I that am a king, 140
 However much he help me at my need,
 Give my one daughter saving to a king,
 And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and called
 A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
 He trusted all things, and of him required
 His counsel 'Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
 'Sir King, there are but two old men that know
 And each is twice as old as I, and one
 Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served 150
 King Uther thro' his magic art, and one
 Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bley's,
 Who taught him magic, but the scholar ran
 Before the master, and so far, that Bley's
 Laud magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
 All things and whatsoever Merlin did
 In one great annal-book, where after-years
 Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth'

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
 'O friend, had I been holpen half as well 160
 By this King Arthur as by thee to day,
 Then beast and man had had their share of me
 But summon here before us yet once more
 Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere'

Then, when they came before him, the King said,
 'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
 And reason in the chase but wherefore now
 Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
 Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
 Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves, 170
 Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Brastias answer'd, 'Ay'
 'Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
 Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—
 For bold in heart and act and word was he,
 Whenever slander breathed against the King—

✓ 'Sir, there be many rumours on this head
 For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
 Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
 And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man 180
 And there be those who deem him more than man,
 And dream he dropt from heaven but my belief
 In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
 Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time
 The pounce and warrior Gorlois, he that held
 Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
 Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne
 And daughters had she borre him,—one whereof,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
 Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved 190
 To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne

And Uther cast upon her eyes of love
 But she, a stanness wife to Gorlois,
 So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,
 That Gorlois and King Uther went to war
 And overthrown was Gorlois and slain
 Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
 Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
 Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
 Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in, 200
 And there was none to call to, but himself
 So, compass'd by the power of the King,
 Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
 And with a shameful swiftness afterward,
 Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
 Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
 After him, lest the realm should go to wrack,
 And that same night, the night of the new year,
 By reason of the bitterness and grief
 That vexed his mother, all before his time, 210
 Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
 Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
 To Merlin, to be holden far apart
 Until his hour should come, because the lords
 Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
 Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child
 Piecemeal among them, had they known, for each
 But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
 And many hated Uther for the sake
 Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the child, 220
 And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
 And ancient friend of Uther, and his wife
 Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own,
 And no man knew. And ever since the lords
 Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
 So that the realm has gone to wrack. But now,
 This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
 Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's hen, your king,"
 A hundred voices cried, "Away with him!
 No king of ours! a son of Gorlois he,
 Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
 Or else baseborn!" Yet Merlin tho' his craft,
 And while the people clamour'd for a king,
 Had Arthur crown'd, but after, the great lords
 Banded, and so brake out in open war'

230

Then while the King debated with himself
 If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
 Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,
 Or Uther's son, and born before his time,
 Or whether there were truth in anything
 Said by these three, there came to Camelhard,
 With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
 Whom as he could, not as he would, the King
 Made feast for, saving, as they sat at meat,

240

"A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.
 Ye come from Arthur's court Victor his men
 Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—
 So many those that hate him, and so strong,
 So few his knights, however brave they be—
 Hath body enow to hold his foemen down!"

250

"O King," she cried, "and I will tell thee few,
 Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him,
 For I was near him when the savage yells
 Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
 Crown'd on the dais, and his warriors cried,
 "Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
 Who love thee!" Then the King in low deep tones,
 And simple words of great authority,

260

Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
 That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
 Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
 Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
 (Half-blinded at the coming of a light)

'But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round,
 With large, divine, and comfortable words,
 Beyond my tongue to tell thee— I beheld
~~From eye to eye thro' all their Order~~ flash *So*
 A momentary likeness of the King
 And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross
 And those around it and the Crucified,
 Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,
 One falling upon each of three fair queens,
 Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
 Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
 Sweet faces, who will help him at his need

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
 And hundred winters are but as the hands
 Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege

280

'And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
 Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful *So*
 She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
 Whereby to drive the heathen out a mist
 Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellmich was hidden in the munster-gloom,
 But there was heard among the holy hymns
 A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
 Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms
 May shake the world, and when the surface rolls
 Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord

290

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

10

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
"Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
"Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
Is yet far off!" So this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down'

300

Then Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister,' and she said,
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I,
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask'd the King
She answer'd, 'These be secret things,' and sign'd
To those two sons to pass, and let them be
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by 'his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard, the same that afterward
~~Struck~~ for the throne, and striking found his doom

310

320

right And then the Queen made answer, 'What know I?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I, and dark

Was Gorlois, yea and daik was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness, but this King is fair
 Beyond the race of Britons and of men 330
 Moreover, always in my mind I hear
 A cry from out the dawning of my life,
 A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
 "O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
 To guard thee on the rough ways of the world"

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a cry?
 But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell thee true
 He found me first when yet a little maid
 Beaten I had been for a little fault 340
 Whereof I was not guilty, and out I ran
 And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
 And hated this fair world and all therein,
 And wept, and wish'd that I were dead, and he—
 I know not whether of himself he came,
 Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
 Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
 And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
 And dried my tears, being a child with me
 And many a time he came, and evermore 350
 As I grew greater grew with me, and sad
 At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,
 Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
 But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
 And now of late I see him less and less,
 But those first days had golden hours for me,
 For then I surely thought he would be king

'But let me tell thee now another tale
 For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
 Died but of late, and sent his cry to me, 360

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

To hear him speak before he left his life
 Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage,
 And when I enter'd told me that himself
 And Merlin ever served about the King,
 Uther, before he died, and on the night
 When Uther in Tintagil past away
 Moaning and wailing for in hen, the two
 Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,
 Then from the castle gateway by the chasm *87* 370
 Descending thro' the dismal night—a night
 In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—
 Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
 It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shipe thereof
 A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
 Bright with a shining people on the decks,
 And gone as soon as seen And then the two
 Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great sea full,
 Wave after wave, each mightier than the last, *88*
 Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep 380
 And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
 Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame
 And down the wave and in the flame was borne
 A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
 Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried "The King!
 Here is an heir for Uther!" And the fringe *89*
 Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
 Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
 And all at once all round him rose in fire,
 So that the child and he were clothed in fire
 And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
 Free sky and stars "And this same child," he said,
 "Is he who reigns, nor could I part in peace
 Till this were told" And saving this the seer
 Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
 Not ever to be question'd any more
 Save on the further side, but when I met

Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth—
 The shining dragon and the naked child
 Descending in the glory of the seas—
 He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me 400
 In riddling triplets of old time, and said

‘ Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow in the sky !
 A young man will be wiser by and by ,
 An old man's wit may wander ere he die
 Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow on the sea !
 And truth is this to me, and that to thee ,
 And truth or clothed or naked let it be
 Rain, sun, and sun ! and the free blossom blows
 Sun, rain, and sun ! and where is he who knows ?
 From the great deep to the great deep he goes ’ 410

‘ So Merlin riddling anger'd me , but thou
 Fear not to give this King thine only child,
 Gawevere so great bards of him will sing
 Hereafter , and dark sayings from of old
 Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
 And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
 For comfort after their wage-work is done,
 Speak of the King , and Merlin in our time
 Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
 Tho' men may wound him that he will not die, 420
 But pass, again to come , and then or now
 Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
 Till these and all men hail him for their king ’

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
 But musing ‘ Shall I answer yea or nay ? ’
 Doubled, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw
 Dreaming a slope of land that ever grew,
 Field after field, up to a height, the peak
 Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom King,

Now looming, and now lost, and on the slope 430
 The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
 Fire glimpsed, and all the land from roof and rick,
 In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
 Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
 And made it thicker, while the phantom king
 Sent out at times a voice, and here or there
 Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
 Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of ours,
 No son of Uther, and no king of ours,'
 Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze 440
 Descended, and the solid earth became
 As nothing, but the King stood out in heaven,
 Crown'd And Leodogran awoke, and sent
 Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,
 Back to the court of Arthur answering yea


Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
 And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
 And bring the Queen,—and watch'd him from the gates
 And Lancelot past away among the flowers,
 (For then was latter April) and return'd 450
 Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere
 To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
 Chief of the church in Britain, and before
 The statelyest of her altar-shrines, the King
 That morn was married, while in stainless white,
 The fair beginners of a nobler time,
 And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
 Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy
 Far shone the fields of May thro' open door,
 The sacred altar blossom'd white with May, 460
 The Sun of May descended on their King,
 They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,
 Roll'd incense, and there past along the hymns
 A voice as of the waters, while the two

Swore at the shine of Christ a deathless love
 And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is mine.
 Let chance what will, I love thee to the death'
 To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,
 'King and my lord, I love thee to the death'
 And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake, 470
 'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
 Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
 And all this Order of thy Table Round
 Fulfil the boundless purpose of then King'

So Dubric said, but when they left the shine
 Great Lords from Rome before the portal stood,
 In scornful stillness gazing as they past,
 Then while they paced a city all on fire
 With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew,
 And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King — 480

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May,
 Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!
 Blow thro' the living world—"Let the King reign"

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
 Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
 Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign

'Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard—
 That God hath told the King a secret word
 Fall battleaxe, and flash brand — ~~Let the King reign~~ 

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust 490
 Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!
 Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
 The King is King, and ever wills the highest
 Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May !
 Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day !
 Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let the King reign

'The King will follow Christ, and we the King
 In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing 500
 Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the King reign'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall
 There at the banquet those great Lords from Rome,
 The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
 Strode in, and claim'd then tribute as of yore
 But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have sworn
 To wage my wars, and worship me their King,
 The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
 And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
 Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old 510
 To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
 No tribute will we pay ' so those great lords
 Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
 Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
 Drew in the petty pryncedoms under him,
 Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
 The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King

‘I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark’d Him in the flowering of His fields, 10
But in His ways with men I find Him not
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim, 20
And have not power to see it as it is
Perchance, because we see not to the close,—
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain,

And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
 Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
 Reels back into the beast and is no more
 My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death
 Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die'

Then, ere the last weird battle in the west,
 There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd 30
 In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
 Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
 Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow all delight!
 Hail, King' to-morrow thou shalt pass away
 Farewell' there is an isle of rest for thee
 And I am blown along a wandering wind,
 And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight'
 And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
 Their season in the night and wail their way
 From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream 40
 Shrill'd, but in going mingled with dim cries
 Far in the moonlight haze among the hills,
 As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
 When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
 Pass to new lords, and Arthur woke and call'd,
 'Who spake? A dream O light upon the wind,
 Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries
 Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
 Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake 50
 'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
 Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field,
 But in their stead thy name and glory cling
 To all high places like a golden cloud
 For ever but as yet thou shalt not pass
 Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
 Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man,

And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—
 I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
 And with him many of thy people, and knights 60
 Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
 Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee
 Right well in heart they know thee for the King
 Arise, go forth and conquer as of old'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere
 'Far other is this battle in the west
 Whereto we move, than when we strove in youth,
 And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,
 Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
 And shook him thro' the north Ill doom is mine 70
 To war against my people and my knights
 The king who fights his people fights himself
 And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke
 That strikes them dead is as my death to me
 Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
 Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I saw
 One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
 Hath folded in the passes of the world'

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
 And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league, 80
 Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—
 A land of old upheaven from the abyss
 By fire, to sink into the abyss again,
 Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
 And the long mountains ended in a coast
 Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
 The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
 There the pursuer could pursue no more,
 And he that fled, no further fly the King,
 And there, that day when the great light of heaven 90
 Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,

On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed
 Nor ever, yet had Arthur fought a fight
 Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west
 A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea
 Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
 Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
 With formless fear, and ev'n on Arthur fell
 Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought
 For friend and foe were shadows in the mist, 100
 And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew,
 And some had visions out of golden youth,
 And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
 Look in upon the battle, and in the mist
 Was many a noble deed, many a base,
 And chance and craft and strength in single fight
 And ever and anon with host to host
 Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
 Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
 Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and shrieks 110
 After the Christ, of those who falling down
 Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist,
 And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
 Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
 Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs
 In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
 Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead,

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
 Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
 Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
 Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
 A dead hush fell, but when the dolorous day
 Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
 A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
 The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
 Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field

Of battle but no man was moving there,
 Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
 Nor yet of heathen, only the van wave P
 Brake in among dead faces, to and fro 130
 Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
 Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
 And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
 And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
 And whiter than the mist that all day long
 / Had held the field of battle was the King (

'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
 And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move, 140
 And beats upon the faces of the dead,
 My dead, as tho' they had not died for me?—
 O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall'n
 Confusion, till I know not what I am,
 Nor whence I am nor whether I be King
 Behold, I seem but King among the dead'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere 'My King,
 King every where' and so the dead have kings,
 There also will I worship thee as King
 Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live W 150
 Who love thee, but who hates thee, he that brought
 The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
 Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine house.'

Then spake the King 'My house hath been my
 doom
 But call not thou this traitor of my house
 Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me—
 My house are rather they who swear my vows,

Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me King
 And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
 When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd,
 That quick or dead thou holdest me for King
 King am I, whatsoever be their cry,
 And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
 Yet, ere I pass' And uttering thus the King
 Made at the man then Modred smote his hege
 Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
 Had beaten thin, while Arthur at one blow,
 Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
 Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea,
 Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
 Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
 King Arthur Then, because his wound was deep,
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplited him,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full

180

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere
 'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
 Whereof this world holds record Such a sleep
 They sleep—the men I loved I think that we
 Shall never more, at any future time,
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
 Walking about the gardens and the halls
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were
 I perish by this people which I made,
 Tho' Merlin swore that I should come again

190

To rule once more, but, let what will be, be,
 I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm—
 That without help I cannot last till morn
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibui,
 Which was my pride for thou rememberest how
 In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king,
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known
 But now delay not take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere
 Watch what thou seist, and lightly bring me word'

200

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere
 'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
 A little thing may harm a wounded man,
 Yet I thy best will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word'

210

So saying, from the run'd shrine he stept,
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam He, stepping down
 By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
 Came on the shining levels of the lake

There drew he forth the brand Excalibui,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,

220

Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work,
 Of subtlest jewellery He gazed so long
 That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
 This way and that dividing the swift mind,
 In act to throy but at the last it seem'd
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
 There in the many-knotted water flags,
 That whistled stiff and dry about the maige
 So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere
 'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I ga
 What is it thou hast seen? or what hast hear

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere
 'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
 And the wild water lapping on the crag'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale
 'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name
 Not rendering true answer, as be seem'd
 Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere
 This is a shameful thing for men to lie
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
 I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought,
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
 How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
 His palms together, and he cried aloud

‘And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men
What good should follow this, if this were done? 260
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms, 270
Saying, “King Arthur’s sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills”
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence
But now much honour and much fame were lost.’

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King 280

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily
‘What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?’

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere
‘I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds’

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath,
‘Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,

Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
 Authority forgets a dying king,
 Laid widow'd of the power in his eye 290
 That bow'd the will I see thee what thou art,
 For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
 In whom should meet the offices of all,
 Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt,
 Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
 Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes
 Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
 And the third time may prosper, get thee hence
 But, if thou spare to sling Excalibur,
 I will arise and slay thee with my hands.' 300

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
 And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
 Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,
 And strongly wheel'd and threw it The great brand
 Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
 And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
 By night, with noises of the Northern Sea
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur 310
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere
 And lightly went the other to the King

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath
 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done
 Speak out what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere
 'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems

Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,^c
 Nor shall see, ~~here~~ or elsewhere, till I die,
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard 330
 'My end draws nigh, 'tis time that I were gone.
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
 And bear me to the margin, yet I fear
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture Him Sir Bedivere
 Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
 And would have spoken, but he found not words, 340
 Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
 And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute So sigh'd the King.
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die'
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd, 350
 Larger than human on the frozen hills
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before His own thought drove him like a road

^{MEAD}
 Dry, clash'd his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he bas'd
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp smitten with the dint of armed heels—
 And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon

360

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern, &
 Beneath them, and descending they were ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold and from them rose
 'A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
 And, as it were one voice, an agony
 Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
 All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
 Or hath come, since the making of the world

370

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge'
 So to the barge they came There those three Queens
 Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
 But she, that rose the tallest of them all
 And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
 And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
 And dropping bitter tears against a brow
 Striped with dark blood for all his face was white
 And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
 Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east,
 And all his greaves and cusses dash'd with drops
 Of onset, and the light and lustrous curls—
 That made his forehead like a rising sun
 High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust,
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,

380

Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King,
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
 From ~~spur to plume~~ a star of tournament,
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere
 'Ah' my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
 For now I see the true old times are dead,
 When every morning brought a noble chance,
 And every chance brought ~~out~~ a noble knight
 Such times have been not since the light that led
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh
 But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
 Which was an image of the mighty world,
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge
 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
 And God fulfils himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself what comfort is in me?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within himself make pure! but thou,
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?

For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God
 But now farewell I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—
 To the island-valley of Avilion,
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow.
 Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns 430
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail *lyh*
 Moved from the brink, like some full breasted swan
 'That, fluting a wild carol ere her death, *long*
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull *lur*
 Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn, *in*
 And on the mere the wailing died away *20. 11.*

But when that moan had past for evermore,
 The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
 Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone'
 And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
 'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb *lv*
 The last hard footstep of that iron crag,
 Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,
 'He passes to be King among the dead,
 And after healing of his grievous wound 450
 He comes again, but—if he come no more—
 O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,
 Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
 On that high day, when, clothed with living light,

They stood before his throne in silence, friends --
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need ?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond ~~the limit of the world~~, *the end*
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars

460

Thereat once more he mov'd about, and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light
And the new sun rose bringing the new year

NOTES.

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

NOTES

1 Leodogran, the King of Camellard These names are variously spelt Leodegraunce, Leodegrin, Lodegrean, and Camelud, Camelyarde, Camelyard, Camelhard in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, and other minor legendary works A note in Wright's edition of Malory says, "Camelhard is apparently the district called *Carmelide* in the English metrical romance of *Merlin*, on the border of which was a town called Breckenho (* Brecknock) Further on in the same poem the capital of Carmelide is said to be Carohaise"

4 Guinevere delight Scan *Fairest earth - the m*
of all created being sin
Guine|vere, and | in her | his one | delight|

The pause after the word 'Guinevere' gives emphasis to the name and importance to the character Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *History of the Britons* spells the name Guanhumara, and states that the lady was "descended from a noble family of Romans, and educated under Duke Cadai of Cornwall, and surpassed in beauty all the women of the island." The following spellings of the name are also found—Guenhara, Genure, Gwenhwyfar, Gaynor, Guenever, and Guinever. *In her - delight - she was the only a*
delight or she was his sole darling in this

5 For many a petty king Geoffrey of Monmouth gives accounts of the reigns of Brutus (grandson of Ascanus) and his three sons, Loecine, Albanach, and Camber, Leir, Belinus (brother of Brennus, the conqueror of Rome), Cassibelaunus, Arviragus, Lucius, Basianus, Carassius, Asclepiodotus, Coel, Octavius, Maximianus, Constantine, Voitigern, and Constantine's sons Aurelius, Ambrosius, and Uther *these are the im*
mediate

13 For first Aurelius died The reign of Aurelius (called 'Aurelius Emrys' in *Gareth and Lynette*) occupies the fifth

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

book of Geoffrey's Chronicle After defeating Vortigern he conquers the Saxons, beheads Hengist, and, by Merlin's aid, transports the great stones called 'The Giant's Dance' from Kildare in Ireland to Salisbury Plain, where he erects them as a monument to the British chiefs slain by Hengist Finally he is poisoned by a Saxon At his death there appears a wonderful comet, from which issue two long and brilliant rays, together with a fairy form much resembling a dragon

14 And after him King Uther The sixth book of the Chronicle contains the reign of Uther His first act after his election to the crown is to cause two golden dragons to be made in imitation of that which he had seen in Uther's comet's tail, one of these he solemnly offers up in the church at Winchester, and takes the other as the royal standard, whence he was afterwards called Pen Dragon or Dragon's head [See the description in *Gumerere* of Arthur's crest, "The Dragon of the great Pendragonship"] After conquering revolters in the northern provinces, Uther goes round all the Scottish nations, and reclaims that rebellious people from their ferocity He then overcomes Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, and marries his widow, Igerne After other battles, he is poisoned by the Saxons, and buried at Stonehenge near his brother Aurelius.

16 for a space A hint is given in these words of the failure which in the end is to overtake the work of Arthur's life *for a time long as he lives*

17 Malory's words are, "But within few yeeres after King Arthur wonne all the North, Scotland and all that were under their obeysance Also a part of Wales held against King Arthur, but hee overcame them all, as hee did the remnant, and all through the noble prowess of himselfe and his knights of the Round Table" (Table Round, the order of knighthood established by King Arthur It took its name from a large round table at which the king and his knights sat for meals Such a table is still preserved at Winchester as having belonged to King Arthur Some accounts say that there were 150 seats at the table, and that it was originally constructed to imitate the shape of the world, which long after Arthur's time was supposed to be flat and circular in form, see *Gumerere* —

(2) "But I was first of all the Kings who drew
The knighthood errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious Company, the flower of men
To serve as model for the mighty world
And be the fair beginning of a time"—

We are further told that this table was originally constructed by Merlin, the wizard, for Uther Pendragon who presented it to Leodogran, but that on Arthur's marriage with Leodogran's

daughter, the table and 100 knights with it were sent to Arthur with Guinevere as a wedding gift that should please him more than a grant of land. One of the seats was called the *Siege* (i.e. seat) *Perilous* [see *The Last Tournament*] because it swallowed up any unchaste person who sat in it. Galahad the Pure was the only knight who could occupy it with safety. Other accounts say that the Round Table was constructed in imitation of the table used by Christ and His disciples at the Last Supper, that it contained 13 seats, and that the seat originally occupied by Christ was always empty except when occupied by the Holy Grail. Other Kings and Princes besides Arthur had Round Tables. In the reign of Edward I. Roger de Mortimer established a Round Table for the furtherance of warlike pastimes, and King Edward III. is said to have done the same. 'To hold a Round Table' came to mean little more than to hold a tournament.

The knights of the Round Table whose deeds are told in *The Idylls of the King*, are—

- Bedivere*. "First made and latest left of all the knights,"
- Lancelot* "His warrior whom he lov'd and honour'd most,"
- **Gawain*. "A reckless and irreverent knight was he,"
- **Modred* "Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom,"
- **Gareth* "Underwent the sooty yoke of kitchen vassalage,"
- Kay* "No mellow master of the meats and drinks,"
- Geraint* "A tributary prince of Devon," married to Enid,
- Balin* "The Savage," and *Balan*, his brother, [Pure,]
- Percival* "Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The
- Galahad* "But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,"
- Bors* "A square set man and honest," of Lancelot's kin,
- Pelleas* "Of the Isles," enamoured of Etarre,
- Tristram* "Of the Woods," slain by Mark, Isolt's husband

Also *Ulfius*, *Brastias*, *Ialence*, and *Saigramore*

↓ 24 rooted, grubbed up by the roots the corn, etc. *Scare = to terrify*

26 the wolf devour, a common occurrence to this day in parts of India

↓ 28 lent four feet Many authentic records of wolf reared children in comparatively modern times are to be found. A good account of a half wild boy, captured in a wolf's den, is given in Dr. Ball's *Jungle Life in India*, where the description of the boy's habits tallies with that given in the text of the habits of his forerunners in *Camelhardt*. Cf. the tale of Romulus and Remus and the ancient belief in the existence of the were wolf, or *loup garou*, a bogie, half-man, half-wolf, that devoured children. Giraldus Cambrensis tells us that Irishmen can "change into wolves."

* Sons of Lot and Bellicent, and so called Arthur's nephews

32 wolf like men Cf *Geraint and Lnd*, of bandit knights —

"Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born
The three gry suits of armour which they wore"

31 mock four feet, go on all fours like the wolf that had suckled them

34 Groan'd for, eagerly longed for

35 his brother king Urien, called 'Rion' in *Merlin* and 'Uryence' or 'Ryence, king of North Wales' by Malory

36 a heathen horde, called Saracens in *Merlin* and by Malory, in reality they were perhaps Norsemen, "the heathen of the Northern Sea" (*Geraint and Lnd*) and Saxons

38 And on the spilke amazed Notice the alliteration, the dominant letters are *sp*, *l*, and *t*, all sharp, hard sounds

43 He is not Uther's son. For the reason of these doubts, see below

54 tho' his face was bare &c his visor, the face piece of his helmet, was raised A hint is, perhaps, here given that Guinevere ought to have instinctively known at sight of Arthur's face that he was God's 'highest creature here', but, as she says of herself, in the Idyll that bears her name, her

"false voluptuous pride, that took
Too easily impressions from below,
Would not look up"

to recognize the height of Arthur's purity

56 Felt life (In this line the first, second, and fifth foot are trochees, as is also the first foot of the next line —

"Felt the | light of | her eyes | into | his life
Smite on | the sud | den"

Such variations from the usual iambic regularity—"discords dear to the musician" (*Sea Dicams*)—give strength and emphasis and prevent monotony. For other examples, see General Introduction, p. xix. Malory says simply, "And there had King Arthur the first sight of Guinever, daughter unto King Leodegraunce, and ever after he loved her"

62 For while For introduces the reason of his return

65 for most kings See below, lines 110-115, for the names of some of them

72 the son of Gorlois Gorlois is called by Geoffrey of Monmouth '*dux Cornubie*,' and by Malory 'duke of Tintagel' in 'Cornewayle' "The small town of Tintagell, in Cornwall is situated on the coast of the Bristol Channel, about four miles from Camelford. The ruins of the castle, which had become so celebrated in mediæval romance, are still seen on the brow of a

rock, partly insulated, overlooking the sea" (Note in Wright's Malory) See below, lines 184 220

¶ 73 the son of Anton. See below, lines 220 223 Malory says, "Well," said Merlin, "I know a lord of yours (Uther's) in this land that is a passing true man and a faithful, and he shal have the nourishing of your child, his name is Sir Ector, and hec is lord of a faire livelyhood in many parts of England and Wales" In the English *Merlin* this lord is called 'Sir Antour'

¶ 75 Travail of the life As in the birth of a child, so it is natural that in the birth of first love there should be a painful sense of yearning and a strong disturbance of a man's whole being So Adam, speaking of Eve (Milton, *P L* viii 530) says —

"here passion first, I felt,
Cominotion strange"

81 What happiness lonely King Cf Adam's complaint in Paradise, *P L* viii 364-5 —

"In solitude
What happiness? Who can enjoy alone?"

82 ye stars that shudder Cf *Fatima* —

"O Love, Love, Love! O withering might!
O Sun, that from thy noonday height
Shudderest when I strain my sight"

83 O earth under me So, in *The Princess*, the "doubts" and "haunting sense of hollow shows" that vex the Prince, die out when the woman he loves yields herself up to him in answer to his prayer,

"Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself,
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust in me"

¶ 84 for saving I be join'd make it live The idea that woman is the complement of man so that only in wedded happiness can man's ideally perfect state be found and that only in such a union can the purpose of his life be rightly fulfilled is the main 'moral' of *The Princess* see the last canto

¶ 94 as he speaks tale The narrative is now resumed by the poet.

95 field of battle bright star With this bright picture of Arthur's great battle at the foundation of his realm contrast that in *The Passing of Arthur* of the "last dim, weird battle of the west," where the death-white mist and confusion dulled the hearts of all

103 The long-lanced run Cf Malory i 13, "Then either battaile let their horses runne as fast as they might," and i 15, "All these fortie knightes rode on afore, with great speres on their thyghes, and spurred theyr horses myghtely as fast as theyr

horses might runne ' battle, the main body of an army Cf
Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, v. 16 —

" Their barbed horsemen, in the rear,
The stern battalia crowned "

lot, here used in the sense of *made, caused* Cf the common use
of *lassen* in German, and *Geraint and Ihuat*, 1 —

" Then the good King gave orders to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn "

105 as here and there swaying, as the chief struggle swerved
now to one part of the field, now to another

106 the Powers world So in *Guinevere* we read of the
" signs and miracles and wonders " that showed the sympathy of
Nature with Arthur at the founding of the Round Table, and
how the land was full of life—

" so glad were spirits and men "

110 the kings Carados Orkney These names are all to be
found in Malory, where (in Wright's edition) they are spelt
Carados, Urience ("of the land of Gore"), Cradelmont (or
Cradelmans), Claurance (or Clariance), Brundegoris, Angusance
(or Angwysance) Morganore ("sencyall with the king of the
hundred knights"), and Lot Geoffrey of Monmouth calls
Anguisant ' Anguselus, King of the Scots.'

120 'Ho' they yield' Cf Malory, i. 15 " With that came
Merlyn upon a great black horse, and sayde to King Arthur,
' Ye have never done, have ye not done ynough' of three score
thousand ye have left on lyve but fiftene thousand, it is tyme
for to saye ho—" 'Ho' is the formal exclamation used by a
commander in battle or the umpire in a tournament to order a
cessation of hostilities Cf Malory, x. 44: " Therewith the hant
prince cried Ho, and then they went to lodging "

121 like a painted battle Cf Coleridge, *The Ancient
Mariner* —

" As idle as a painted ship,
Upon a painted ocean "

Observe the accents in this line—

" Sô like a painted bittle the war stood "

—where the two accented syllables at the end of the line weight
the rhythm and slow it down to prepare the representative pause
after "Silenced," in the next line See General Introduction,

p xviii

124 his warrior most Sir Lancelot of the Lake, see
below, lines 446, 7

127 the fire of God battle field Cf *Lancelot and Elaine*,
where Lancelot again says of Arthur

"in his heathen was the fire of God
Fills him I never saw his like there lives
No greater leader"

129 Whereat the two deathless love In the days of
chivalry it was a common custom for two knights to swear to
each other a defensive and offensive alliance, and they were then
called *fratres jurati*, sworn brothers

132 Man's word is God in man This expression occurs again
in *Balin and Balan* So in *Harold*, ii 2, "Words are the man"

135 Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere Scan

"Ulfus | and Bris[tias] | and Bed[ivere]"

Lines composed of proper names often take license in their scan-
sion of Verg *Georg* i 437 —

"Glīnēō | ēt Pāno|pēt ēt | Īnō|ō Mēli|cērtā"

Ulfus seems to be the Latinized form of the English 'wolf'

"Geoffrey of Monmouth calls him *Ulfius de Ricardock* In the
early French romances it is *Ulfus* and the *Ulfus* of the English
editions may be a mere misreading" (Note in Wright's *Malory*)

141 help Cf *holpen*, line 160, below

150 Merlin art. "According to Geoffrey of Monmouth (lib
vi cc 18, 19) Merlin had been court magician since the time
of Vortigern, who had caused him to be sought as the only one
capable of relieving him out of the difficulty he had encountered
in raising a castle on Salisbury Plain" (Note in Wright's
Malory) Welsh traditions spell the name Mereddin and narrate
that he was the Bard of Emrys Wladig, the Ambrosius of Saxon
history, by whose command he built Stonehenge "The true
history of Merlin seems to be that he was born between the years
470 and 480, and during the invasion of the Saxon took the name
of Ambrose, which preceded his name of Merlin, from the success-
ful leader of the Britons, Ambrosius Aurchanus, who was his
first chief and from whose service he passed into that of King
Arthur, the southern leader of the Britons" (Morley, *English
Writers*, i) Malory introduces Merlin somewhat abruptly as
called in to help Uther in his love sickness for the fair Igrayne
Thus he does on condition that Uther and Igrayne's son shall be
given up as soon as born into his keeping "for to nourish there
as I will have it, for it shall be your worship and the childes
awaile as much as the child is worth" Merlin is represented in
Merlin and Vivien as the son of a demon and also as "the great
Enchanter of the Time," and again as

"the most famous man of all those times,
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,
Was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens,
The people call'd him Wizard—"

152. Merlin's master Bloys Blease, Bleyse, or Blaise, according to the legend of *Merlin*, was a holy hermit who had protected the mother of Merlin from the fiend who was Merlin's father and had undertaken Merlin's education from infancy. Malory tells us how Merlin, after Arthur's great battle against the kings, took his leave of King Arthur "for to goe see his master Blease which dwelt in Northumberland", Merlin gave Blease an account of the fight, "and so Bleyse wrote the battayle word by worde as Merlyn tolde him, how it began, and by whom, and in like wise howe it was ended and who had the worst All the batayles that were done in Arthurs dayes Merlyn caused Bleyse his master to write them"

155 sathim down *Him* is here, by origin, in the dative case, such 'reflexive datives' with intransitive verbs were very common in old English, for examples see Maetzner, *Eng Gram* vol II pp 64, 65 Cf *Ænone*, 156, "rest thee sure," and Scott, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, II 2, "Speed thee what thou hast to do"

160 holpen half as well of me Meaning, of course, that the chamberlain's help had, in fact, been less than no help at all

166. I have seen chase, the reason being that the young cuckoo, having been hatched in the nest of the lesser fowl, tries to oust the offspring of the rightful owner, cuckoos' eggs are often found in the nests of smaller birds The King asks if the lords have any reason for thinking Arthur has been put in possession of a throne to which he has by birth no right Cf *Harold Show-day at Battle Abbey*—"The cuckoo Crying with my false egg I overwhelm The native nest"

173 Then Bedivere the King The character of Bedivere, who, in *The Passing of Arthur*, is the King's last companion—"First made and latest left of all the knights"—is distinctly and consistently painted He is a plain, blunt, honest soul, who troubles himself little about the doubts and difficulties which beset the belief of others in the right of Arthur's kingship He takes no account of any supernatural claim, sweeps away all the mystery with which some would surround Arthur's birth, and gives a simple, natural and, to himself at all events, a satisfactory account of Arthur's parentage. Compare his conduct in *The Passing of Arthur*, where, when even the King is shaken by doubts and inward questionings, he will have none of them, where he cares nothing for ghosts and dreams, and reckons all mystic portents as the harmless glamour of the field He feels that Arthur is his true king, and having once made up his mind on the point despises all rumours and never swerves from unquestioning loyalty

178 For there be baseborn. See Introduction to the *Idylls*

181 And there be from heaven. See Introduction

182 but my belief. An instance of the syntax known as the "pendent nominative", the noun 'belief' is left 'hanging,' as it were, with no verb to rest on, owing to a change of construction after the sentence has been begun

184 Sir, for ye know, etc. For often begins a promised story, cf lines 358, 9, below, and *The Passing of Arthur*, 6. So γάρ in Greek and enim in Latin

187 Ygerne. "For she was called a fair lady and a passing wise, and her name was called Igraine" (Malory, 1. 1)

188 daughters had she borne. These are called by Malory Margawse, Elaine, and Morgan le Fay, the last named "was put to school in a nunnery, and there she learned so much that she was a great clerk of nigromancy"

✓ 194. the bright dishonour. An example of the figure of speech called 'oxymoron', cf Horace's *Splendide mendax*, and *Lancelot and Elaine* —

"His honour rooted in dishonour stood
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true."

204. afterward. After him. Malory makes Uther survive Arthur's birth nearly two years.

✓ 210 all before his time. "All" is an adverb = 'quite' or 'much'.

✓ 211 all as soon as born. "All" = 'just'.

212 Deliver'd postern gate. "Then when the lady was delivered, the king commanded two knights and two ladies to take the child bound in a cloth of gold, and that ye deliver him to what poor man ye meet at the postern gate of the castle. So the child was delivered unto Merlin" (Malory, 1. 3)

217 for each hand. "Then stood the realm in great jeopardy long while, for every lord that was mighty of men made him strong, and many wend to have been king" (Malory, 1. 3)

223 rear'd him own. Malory calls young Arthur Sir Kay's "nourished brother," and tells how on learning his real parentage he says of his foster father, "Ye are the man in the world that I am most beholding to and my good lady and mother your wife, that as well as her own hath fostered me and kept"

230 A hundred baseborn. "Some of the kings had marvel of Merlin's words and deemed well that it should be as he said and some of them laughed him to scorn, as King Lot and more other called him a witch" (Malory, 1. 6)

234 clamour'd for a king. "And at the feast of Pentecost all manner of men assayed to pull at the sword that would assay, but none might prevail but Arthur; and he pulled it out afore all the lords and commons that were there, wherefore all the

commons cried at once, We will have Arthur unto our king"
(*Malory*, i 5)

✓ 245 as he could would, as liberally as his broken fortunes
allowed, not as liberally as he would have wished

✓ 247 ice on summer seas, as little likely to endure as ice that
has floated into the warmth of southern seas Icebergs frequently
float from the Arctic regions so far south as to be melted by the
warm Gulf Stream Cf *Coventry Patmore's Angel in the House*,
vi 2

"An iceberg in an Indian sea."

✓ 252. Hath body enow, has strength enough, whether of arm, or
mind, or following Throughout the *Idylls*, Tennyson uses the
old form 'enow' it was originally a plural form of 'enough'

253 O King and, etc, i e "O King, (listen) and (then) I
will tell," etc Tennyson frequently uses this old form, a con-
junction immediately following an invocation.

✓ 257 daïs, from the same root as *disc*, and meaning originally a
quoit, then a round platter, then a high table, then a canopy
over a high table or throne, and finally the raised platform on
which a high table or a throne stands

258 in low deep tones coming of a light These lines are
often quoted as the finest in the poem.

261 so strait vows *Strait* and *strict* are doublets, i e words
of the same (or a similar) meaning from one root These vows
are briefly enumerated in *Gareth and Lynette* —

"my knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter gentleness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King,"

See *Tristram's* account of these vows in *The Last Tournament*

✓ 262 some Were pale ghost, being struck with awe at the
solemnity of the vows they had sworn

✓ 263 Some flush'd, as fired by noble enthusiasm for lofty deeds.

✓ 264. others dazed light, dazzled, as it were, by the bright-
ness of the revelation of a new life and duties in store for them,
which at first they could only partly understand A picture of
this life and its duties is given in *Gunerere* —

"I made them lay their hands in mine and swear,
To reverence the King as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,

To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her."

267 large, sublime ✓ comfortable, comforting, cheering, Tennyson has 'comfortable words' again in *The Lover's Tale* and in *Queen Mary*, v 2 So in the Communion Service in the English Prayer Book "Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith to all that truly turn to him."

269 From eye likeness of the King Cf *The Holy Grail* —

"and this Galahad when he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze,
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I"

✓ 273 Down from the casement, i.e. through the glass of the "storied window richly dight" with the picture of Christ on the Cross

274 vert, and azure, heraldic names for green and blue In early legends the different colours are sometimes supposed to be symbolic of various virtues or feelings Thus *red*, "celestial rosy red, Love's proper hue," as Milton calls it; typified Love, *green*, Hope, and *blue*, Truth or Faith

275 three fair queens. See Introduction On the deck of a dark barge which bears Arthur away after his last battle in *The Passing of Arthur*, there also stood "black stoled, black hooded" "three queens with crowns of gold" who "put forth their hands and took the king and wept." Bedivere asks if they be not

"the three wherewith we gazed
On that high day, when clothed with living light,
They stood before the throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?"

See note to *The Passing of Arthur*, line 366

279 mage Merlin. See note to l 150, above

282 Lady of the Lake For Malory's account of "How Arthur by the mean of Merlin gat Excalibur his sword of the Lady of the Lake," see his *Morte d'Arthur*, i 23

283 Who knows Lord See Introduction

284 Clothed wonderful. "And in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite" (Malory) See also the description of the finding and the casting away of Excalibur in *The Passing of Arthur*, where this line is repeated as a 'permanent epithet' of the arm that arose from the lake ✓ samite is a rich silk stuff interwoven with gold or silver thread, derived from Gk *hex*, six, and *mitos*, thread of the warp, literally 'woven of six threads', cf *dimity* Tennyson has 'red

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

‘samite’ and ‘blackest samite’ in *Lancelot and Elaine*, and ‘crimson samite’ in *The Holy Grail*

285 his huge cross blited sword. The cross shaped hilt of the swords of Christian knights, symbolic of their religious belief, was often used as a sacred emblem upon which oaths were taken, and which sometimes reminded them of their vows. Malory (xiv 9) tells of Sir Percivale how, when sore tempted all naked, in whose pommel was a red cross, and the sign of the crucifix therein, and bethought him on his knighthood, and his promise made toforehand unto the good man. Then he made the sign of the cross in his forehead, and therewith the pavilion turned up so down, and then it changed unto a smoke and a black cloud, and then he was adred

286 a mist Lord For the allegorical significance of this description see Introduction, and of the description of the gate of the Lady of the Lake in *Gareth and Lynette*

290 A voice as of the waters Cf Bible, Rev xiv 2, “And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters” Cf also *Lancelot and Elaine* —

“She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns,
Heard on the winding waters”

↓ for she dwells world. It is a scientific fact that even the most violent storms affect only the surface of the ocean, leaving its depths undisturbed

↓ 293 Hath power Lord Cf Bible, Matt. xiv 25, “And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea”

294 Excalibur In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, ii 3, the Lady of the Lake, who had given Arthur the sword, says “The name of it is Excalibur, that is as much to say as Cut steel” According to the English romance *Merlin*, the sword bore the following inscription —

“Ich am y hote Escalabore,
Unto a king a fair tresore,”

and it is added —

“On Inglis is this writing
Kerve steel and iren and al thing”

In the French *Merlin* it is said that the name is a Hebrew word meaning ‘tres cher et acier fer,’ which is, perhaps, a printer's mis correction of the true reading ‘trancher acier et fer,’ carve steel and iron Cf Malory, iv 9 — “And then he (Arthur) deemed treason, that his sword was changed, for his sword bit not steel as it was wont to do” The name is also written

Escaibore and Caliburn In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Chronicle* we read how "Arthur himself, dressed in a breastplate worthy of so great a king, places on his head a golden helmet engraved with the semblance of a dragon. Over his shoulders he throws his shield called *Prusen*, on which a picture of Holy Mary, Mother of God, constantly recalled her to his memory. Girt with *Caliburn*, a most excellent sword, and fabricated in the isle of Avalon, he graces his right hand with the lance named *Ron*. This was a long and broad spear, well contrived for slaughter." Merlin informed Arthur that Excalibur's scabbard was "worth ten of the sword, for while ye have the scabbard upon you ye shall lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded" (Malory, i 23). Arthur had also a second best sword, *Clarent*, and in *Merlin*, ii 9, he is described as capturing the Irish king Ryance's "excellent sword *Marandorse*." Gawain also had a "good sword," called *Galatine*.

The notion of enchanted armour is found in many old poets and romancers of various nations. In the *Mahabarat* the magic bow of Arjuna is described under the name *Gandiva*, and Mukta Phalaketu in the *Katha Sarit Sagar* (chap. 115) is presented by Siva with a sword named *Invincible*. The names of some of the most celebrated of these enchanted weapons are given below —

Ali's	sword,	<i>Zulphkar</i>
Cæsar's	"	<i>Crocea Mors</i>
Charlemagne's	"	<i>La Joyeuse</i>
Lancelot's	"	<i>Aroundight</i>
Orlando's	"	<i>Durindana</i>
Siegfried's	"	<i>Balmung</i>
The Cid's	"	<i>Colada</i>

A list of some thirty five such weapons is given in Brewer's *Dict of Phrase and Fable*, s v *Sword*. Cf Longfellow's lines —

"It is the sword of a good knight,
Tho' homespun be his mail,
What matter if it be not hight
Joyeuse, Colada, Durindale,
Excalibar, or Aroundight."

Spenser (*F Q* ii 8 19) calls Arthur's sword *Morddure*.

297 rich With jewels Cf the description in *The Passing of Arthur*, ii 224-226

298 *Urim*, fairy jewellery of mystic significance. So in Milton, *Par Lost*, vi 760, 761, of the armour of the Son of God

"He in celestial panoply all arm'd
Of radiant *Urim*, work divinely wrought"

Cf the description of the "breastplate of judgment" made for the high priest, Bible, *Exodus*, xxxiii 15 30 — "And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the *Urim* and the *Thummim*,"

and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually" also *Numbers*, xxvii 21, *Deut* xxviii 8, *Ezra*, ii 63, and 1 *Sam* xxviii 6 — "And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" The Urim and Thummin seem to have been a mysterious contrivance in or on the High Priest's breastplate, which was supposed to give oracular responses, it consisted, according to some authorities, either of the four rows of precious stones upon which the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were inscribed, or of three precious stones, one of which, by some peculiar appearance on it, indicated 'Yes,' another 'No,' while the third implied that the answer was neutral Urim means Light, and Thummin, Truth

299 the blade by it Cf *Gareth and Lynette* —

"but this was all of that true steel
Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings played about it in the storm."

Cf Malory, i. 7, "Then he drew his sword Excalibur, but it was so bright in his enemies eyes that it gave light like thirty torches" So also in *The Passing of Arthur* when Excalibur was cast away, it

"Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon"

300 on one side Is yet far off See Introduction

312. The swallow dear sister Though not in the interrogative form, this statement is meant to suggest a question and a doubt.

319 And Gawain half heard. The distinction here suggested between the natures of Gawaine and Modred is carried out in the other Idylls For a sketch of the characters of the two brothers see *The Passing of Arthur*, notes to li 33 and 59 In *Guncwre* also Modred's eaves dropping propensity is noticed —

"Modred still in green, all ear all eye,
Climb'd to the high top of the garden wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might"

324 Struck for the throne doom See *Guncwre* and *The Passing of Arthur*

329 fair of men. Arthur's fairness of complexion is alluded to in *The Passing of Arthur*, see lines 337, "with wide blue eyes," and 384, "his light and lustrous curls" The ancient Britons were generally of a light complexion, and 'blonde as an Englishwoman' is still used in France as a description of unusual fairness

336 "Ay and hear ye," "Is it so and do you hear"

346 who can walk Unseen. A common attribute of wizards, generally described as inherent in some magic amulet, dress, ring or herb that they wore Cf Shaks, 1 *Henry IV* 1 4 — "We have the receipt of fern seed, we walk invisible," and Beaumont and Fletcher, *Fair Maid of the Inn*, 1 —

"Why, did you think that you had Gyges' ring,
Or the herb that gives invisibility?"

✓ 362 Shrunk like a fairy changeling It was an accepted doctrine of fairy lore that wicked fairies had the power to substitute an elf or imp of their own species for a human child. The changeling, however, was soon recognized as no natural offspring by its peevishness and wizened, shrivelled appearance, it often resembled a little old man with a face full of puckers and wrinkles Cf Shaks, 1 *Henry IV* 1 1 —

"Oh, that it could be proved
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged
In cradle clothes, our children as they lay"

374 and all decks Contrast this bright vision with the gloomy blackness of the "dusky barge, dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern" which carries Arthur away in *The Passing of Arthur*. The dragon ship is "gone as soon as seen", the barge glides slowly away till it appears to go

"From less to less and vanish into light"

379 a ninth one Every ninth wave, and in a smaller degree every third, was commonly believed to be larger than those that went before it Cf *εν κακῶν τριὰς*, Æschylus, *Prom 1* 1015 Southey, in his Notes to *Madoc*, says that the ninth wave is often spoken of by Welsh poets, and quotes, "Eva of the hue of the spraying foam before the ninth wave" The Romans thought that the tenth wave was the largest "Decumana ova dicuntur et decumani fluctus, quia sunt larga"

380 full of voices Cf *The Voice and the Peak* and *Ulysses*, 1 55 —

"the deep
Moans round with many voices,"
also *The Passing of Arthur*, 1 134, of the sea —

"rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be"
and ll. 290, 464, of this Idyll —

"A voice as of the waters"

It is recorded that Tennyson's first line of poetry, composed at the age of 5 years, was

"I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind"

J 390 presently, immediately, this was the old meaning of the word, which has now come to denote 'after a short interval'

✓ 391 Free sky, clear of its dismal, dark clouds

392 part, i.e. 'depart,' the old meaning of 'part,' whereas the old meaning of 'depart' was the same as that of the modern 'part' = 'separate,' the two words having exchanged meanings. In the marriage service of the Church of England the phrase "till death us *do part*" appears to be a modern substitution for the original "till death us *depart*," i.e. "till death separate us." So Scott, *Marmion*, II. 32, has, of a man condemned to death,

"Sinful brother, part in peace"

401 riddling triplets of old time Cf *Gareth and Lynette* —

"'Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards'"

Confusion, and illusion, and relation,

Elusion, and occasion, and evasion'"

The most ancient of the Cambrian Bards wrote in stanzas of three rhyming lines, called *Englyn Mawr*, or "The Warrior's Triplet," each line containing seven syllables. Hence are said to have sprung the Welsh Triads, which contained the Cymric systems of theology, ethics, history, jurisprudence, and bardism. Facts and teachings were strung together in successive groups of three of a kind.

402 410 Merlin's riddling response would give Queen Bellisent but little satisfaction, but what more definite answer could be offered by the human intellect, however powerful, to a question which in effect is identical with Pilate's query, "What is truth?" "As we have before our eyes," he says, "the great processes of Nature and their outward effects, so we see in human life the ripening of youth and the decay of age

"The result of Nature's workings may present different phenomena to different eyes, but each may be to the eye that sees it a truthful reflection of objective fact, and the variation may be due to the difference of the point of view

"The various forces of Nature call the wild flower into visible life: what more does anyone know of its origin? And of Arthur's origin different views may be held, and each, in its kind, may be true: all that I can tell is that he springs from the great deep of a mysterious past, rises through an arc of visible existence, and sinks again into the great deep of an unfathomable eternity."

But some of Merlin's expressions seem meant to have a side reference to the incidents narrated by the Queen: thus, the "old man's wit" that wanders may glance at Bleys's strange tale, and the 'naked' truth recalls the 'naked babe.' The mocking answer of the old seer (in *Gareth and Lynette*) to Gareth, who asked him

a question similar to Queen Bellicent's here, has much in common with Merlin's mysterious response Cf particularly the seer's

"And here is truth, but an it please thee not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me?"

409 From the great deep. he goes According to the *Triads of Bardism*, "Animated Beings have three States of Existence, that of Inchoation in the Great Deep or Lowest Point of Existence, that of Liberty in the State of Humanity, and that of Love, which is happiness in Heaven" Cf *De Profundis*, *The Two Greetings*, 1, of birth and death—

"Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep

To that last deep where we and thou are still "
and *Crossing the Bar* —

"When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home "

Cf also *Guinevere* —

"And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth "

417 wage work For examples of alliteration in double words, see General Introduction. Cf *haze hidden*, 1 429, below

420 will not die come again. The belief in a 'second coming' is found in many of the legends of ancient heroes, e g in those of Charlemagne, Barbarossa, Desmond, Sebastian of Brazil Malory, xxi 7 writes, "Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu in another place And men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse, "Hic jacet Arthurus Rex quondam Rexque futurus."

420 a phantom king Crown'd. Mr Hutton, *Literary Essays*, remarks on this dream, " ('the dream in which he mingles the story of the actual wars of Arthur against the heathen with the rumours of the still struggling passions of his rebellious subjects, and yet augurs that the grandeur of the king will survive even the history of his deeds—is a splendid embodiment of Tennyson's drift throughout the poem Grant that a perfect king is a phantom of the human imagination, yet it is a phantom which will haunt it long after what we call the real earth shall have dissolved Like all true authority, that of the ideal king is hidden in mystery, but the image of his glory in the heavens survives the crumbling of his kingdom on earth "

449 flowers latter April. Notice the appropriateness of the season

451 In May The joyousness of May time is often a theme of old writers Malory, xx 1, writes, "In May, when every lusty heart flourisheth and burgeneth, for as the season is lusty to behold and comfortable, so man and woman rejoice and gladden of summer coming with his fresh flowers"

152 Dubric or Dubritius, archbishop of Caerleon upon Usk and primate of Britain Dryton, *Polyolbion*, xxiv, calls him "St Dubric, whose report old Caerleon still doth carry"

454 The stateliest of her altar-shrines Malory, iii 5, says, "Then was the high feast made ready and the King was wedded at Camelot unto Dame Guenever in the church of St Stephen's with great solemnity"

459 fields of May white with May Sun of May Many similar instances of repetition in successive lines of some leading word may be found in Tennyson's poems Cf *Geraint and Enid*, 1. —

"Forgetful of his promise to the king,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his princedom and its cares,"

also *The Holy Grail* —

"Blood red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood red,"

and *Guinevere* —

"Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past
To where, beyond these voices, there is peace"

464. A voice as of the waters See L 290, above.

468 with drooping eyes Was this an ordinary bride timidity or due to her consciousness that her heart was not the king's?

476 Great Lords from Rome Malory, v 1, tells how twelve aged ambassadors of Rome came to King Arthur as ambassadors and messagers from the Emperor Lucius, which was called at that time Dictator or Procuror of the Public Weal of Rome, to demand truage of the realm on the ground of the statutes and decrees made by Julius Cæsar conqueror of the realm. And subsequently we read how Arthur made war against Lucius and smote him with Excalibur, "that it cleft his head from the summit of his head, and stunted not till it came to his breast And then the emperor fell down dead, and there ended his life"

488 That God secret word. Arthur had, doubtless, informed his knights, when swearing them of the Table Round, how

authority had been bestowed on him and sanction given to his "boundless purpose" by secret revelation from heaven

499 The King will follow King Of St Paul's words, Bible, 1 Cor xi 1 — "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ "

503 The slowly fading world. In the fifth century (about 411) the last of the Roman legions was withdrawn from Britain Rome needed all her soldiers at home the Goth was on her track, and as an empire she was already on the wane

506 'Behold pay' Malory, v 2, tells "how the kings and lords promised to King Arthur aid and help against the Romans " Arthur's reply to the demand for truage is thus given "I will that ye return unto your lord and Procuror of the Common Weal for the Romans and say to him, Of his demand and commandment I set nothing, and that I know of no truage, ne tribute that I owe to him, ne to none other earthly prince, Christian ne heathen, but I pretend to have and occupy the sovereignty of the empire, wherein I am entitled by the right of my predecessors, sometime kings of this land "

511. your Roman wall Agricola drew a line of military stations across the interval, about 40 miles in length, between the Firth of Forth and the Clyde, in the reign of Antoninus Pius this line was afterwards fortified by a turf rampart, erected on foundations of stone The Emperor Hadrian caused a rampart of earth to be erected between Newcastle and Carlisle, and Septimius Severus had a stone wall built parallel to Hadrian's rampart and in the same locality Considerable traces of these walls may still be seen

517 twelve great battles Some of these battles are enumerated and described in *Lancelot and Elaine*

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

NOTES

The incidents in Arthur's career that immediately preceded his death are briefly these. The queen, Guinevere, had left the king's court, and fled to hiding at the nunnery of Amesbury, owing to the discovery by the treacherous Modred, the king's nephew, of her love for Lancelot. King Arthur had gone to attack Lancelot in the north, during his absence Modred had raised a revolt, and had had himself crowned king. The king marched south, and pursued Modred to the west coast. On his way he stopped at Amesbury, and had the farewell interview with the repentant queen so beautifully described in the Idyll of *Guinevere*. The king then marches westward in pursuit of Modred.

1 That story minds. These lines form a second and explanatory title to the poem. the bold Sir Bedivere. 'Bold' is what is called a 'permanent epithet,' since it is nearly always used by the poet along with the name of Bedivere. So, in Homer, Achilles is always 'swift-footed,' and in Vergil, Aeneas is always 'pious,' and in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, William of De lorraine is always 'good at need.' In *The Coming of Arthur* Bedivere's boldness shows itself specially in his defence of Arthur's right to the throne —

"For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the King."

For other points in Bedivere's character see lines 50 64, 150 3, 256 277, below, and notes.

2 First made and latest left. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur* —

"Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning—"

In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, xxi. 4, we read how at the end of his last great battle King Arthur "looked about him and there was hee warre that of al his hoost and of al his good knights, were left no moe alive but two knights, that was Sir Lucan the butler and Sir Bedivere his brother, and they were right sore wounded", and in the next chapter Sir Lucan's death is described, "therewith the noble Knight's heart brast," so that Bedivere was left as the sole survivor of all Arthur's knights.

3 when the man voice, when extreme old age had left Bedivere only strength enough to tell the tale of his past life. Cf. the Latin *vox et præterea nihil*.

5 other minds, unsympathetic minds, different in feeling from those of Bedivere's fellows in the "true old times" that were dead—cf. ll. 495-496, below

6 For on their march 'For' introduces the facts which form the substance of Bedivere's story and which may be called the reason why he had a story to tell to westward. See below, l. 59 and note

7 Who slowly King Bedivere, passing in the quiet night through the slumbering camp, overheard Arthur in his tent mourning over the failure of his purpose.

8 I found Him . . . and Him not Arthur cannot understand why the glory and power of God should be so clearly manifested in the works of nature in the visible beauty of heaven and earth while His dealings with mankind seem full of mystery and contradiction. Arthur had fought in God's cause and founded the Round Table for "love of God and men" was he now to die amid the ruins of his life's work?

13 for why In Old English we have a form *for why* or *for why* (= because), where *for* or *for* is the old instrumental case of the relative pronoun *why*. The expression *for why*, used, as here, as an equivalent to the interrogative *wherefore*, is met with in old ballad poetry and in modern imitations of it, as in Cowper's *John Gilpin*, ll. 211-12 —

"He lost them sooner than at first,
I or why?—they were too big"

In *Harper's Magazine* for December 1883, Mrs. Anne Thackeray Ritchie writes, "The first 'Idyll' and the last, I have heard Mr. Tennyson say, are intentionally more archaic than the others." This archaism is noticeable in the studied severity and simplicity of the diction generally as well as in the use of such old forms or words as *stricken*, *upheaven*, *lightly*, *lest*, *hief*, in the repetition of 'permanent epithets,' whether composed of single words as in 'bold Sir Bedivere,' or of whole lines as "Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful;" also in the formal introduction to each speech, as

"Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere"

"To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere"

14 lesser God world So the Gnostic heresy taught that God was a being far removed from all care for this world, both creating and governing it by inferior powers or beings sent forth by Him, one of whom they held to be the 'Word' or the 'Wisdom' of God. This notion was adopted from the Platonic *demiurges* lesser, the double comparative form, is generally used as the comparative of 'less,' the adjective. In Shakspeare, 'lesser' is sometimes an adverb, as in "Others that lesser hate him"

16 Cf Tennyson, *The Ancient Sage* —

"But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this house of ours,
So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of man
A beauty with defect—till That which knows,
And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half deed, and shape it at the last
According to the Highest in the Highest "

from beyond, from His seat in the highest heavens

10 But that to the close Cf Cowper's hymn beginning
"God moves in a mysterious way," especially the lines

"Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain,"

and Gerant and Emd, ii —

"O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true,
Here thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen "

Also *The Ancient Sage* —

"My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness be in man?
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light

And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade
And show us that the world is wholly fair "

24 And all peace alludes specially to the treachery of
Guinevere and Lancelot.

26 Reels beast Cf *The Coming of Arthur*, 10 12 —

"And so there grew great tracts of wilderness
Wherein the beast was ever more and more
But man was less and less, till Arthur came,"

and *The Last Tournament*, 122 5 —

"Or whence the fear lest this my realm, uprear'd
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
From flat confusion and brute violences
Reel back into the beast and be no more."

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

16 Cf Tennyson, *The Ancient Sage* —
 "But some in yonder city hold, my son,
 That none but Gods could build this house of ours,
 So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
 All work of man, yet, like all work of man
 A beauty with defect—till That which knows,
 And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel
 Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
 On this half deed, and shape it at the last
 According to the Highest in the Highest "

from beyond, from His seat in the highest heavens
 19 But that to the close Cf Cowper's hymn beginning
 "God moves in a mysterious way," especially the lines
 "Blind unbelief is sure to err
 And scan His work in vain,"

and Geraint and Emd, ii —
 "O purblind race of miserable men,
 How many among us at this very hour
 Do forge a life long trouble for ourselves,
 By taking true for false, or false for true,
 Here thro' the feeble twilight of this world
 Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
 That other, where we see as we are seen."

Also *The Ancient Sage* —

"My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
 So dark that men cry out against the Heavens
 Who knows but that the darkness be in man?
 The doors of Night may be the gates of Light.

And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
 No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
 Await the last and largest sense to make
 The phantom walls of this illusion fade
 And show us that the world is wholly fair "

24. And all peace alludes specially to the treachery of
 Guinevere and Lancelot

26. Reels beast. Cf *The Coming of Arthur*, 10 12 —
 "And so there grew great tracts of wilderness
 Wherein the beast was ever more and more
 But man was less and less, till Arthur came,"

and *The Last Tournament*, 122-5 —
 "Or whence the fear lest this my realm, uprear'd
 By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
 From flat confusion and brute violences
 Reel back into the beast and be no more."

Cf also *In Mem* cxviii. —

“Till at the last arose the man,
Who throve and branched from clime to clime
The herald of a higher race

Move upward, working out the beast
And let the ape and tiger die ”

Many similar passages might be quoted to show that Tennyson views Nature and Society “with the eye of the evolutionist ”

27 *My God death.* Compare the despairing cry of David, Bible, *Psalms*, xxi 1, when he “complains in great discouragement,” “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” — a cry which is repeated by Christ on the Cross see *Matthew*, xxvii 46, and *Mark*, xv 34. In various parts of *The Idylls of The King* an analogy is suggested between the life of Christ and that of the ideal King, common to both are the mystic origin, the unceasing struggle against evil, the seeming failure, the ‘agony,’ the ‘passing, to come again’ Cf *Gareth and Lynette*, 116 —

“Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King ”

Cf also line 157, below, and note, and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* —

“Forward till you see the highest Human Nature is divine ”

“King Arthur stands out as a mystic incarnation, a Christ-man pure, noble, unerring coming mysteriously into the world, and vanishing mysteriously, according to the prophecy of Merlin

‘From the great deep to the great deep he goes’

He is the perfect flower of purity and chivalry, and the kingdom he seeks to found is the very kingdom of Christ upon earth” (Dawson’s *The Makers of Modern English*)

28 *I pass not die* Even in the extremity of his despair Arthur has faith in the fulfilment of the prophecy regarding his mysterious doom made by Merlin, ‘the wise man’, see *The Coming of Arthur*, 418, 9 —

“And Merlin in our time

Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho’ men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass again to come ”

29 *weird battle* See the description of the battle, below, lines 96 135

30 *Gawain* was brother of Modred and Gareth and nephew of King Arthur, being son of his sister, “Lot’s wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent ”

31 *killed in Lancelot’s war* Malory, *Morte d’Arthur*, xxi. 2, thus describes Gawain’s death “And then was the noble

knight sir Gawaine found in a great boate lying more than halfe dead 'My uncles King Arthur,' said sir Gawaine, 'wit ye well that my deathes day is come and all is through mine owne hastinesse and wilfulnesse, for I am smitten upon the old wound that sir Launcelot du Lake gave me, of the which I feele that I must die' And so at the houre of noone sir Gawaine betooke his soule into the hands of our Lord God."

31 the ghost of Gawain. The heading of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, xxi. 3, is "How after sir Gawaine's goast appeared unto King Arthur, and warned him that he should not fight as at that day" The appearance of such visions, significant of coming evil, before a fatal fight, is often narrated in old chronicles of the vision of Samuel appearing to Saul at Endor before his last battle and death, and that of Cæsar to Brutus before Philippi, and those of the Norman Saints to Harold before Senlac (*Harold*, v 1) Malory makes Arthur have a dream also before his first great fight for the throne blown wandering wind. In Dante's *Purgatorio*, Canto v, the punishment of "carnal sinners" is thus described —

"The stormy blast of hell
With restless fury drives the spirits on,
Whirl'd round and dash'd again with sore annoy
When they arrive before the ruinous sweep,
There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans,
And blasphemies 'gainst the good Power in heaven.
I understood that to this torment sad
The carnal sinners are condemn'd, in whom
Reason by lust is sway'd" (Cary's Translation)

Somewhat similar is the idea in Vergil, *Æn* vi 140 —

"aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos"

32 Hollow all delight Gawain's character is gradually developed in the *Idylls* At first we have a bright, frank, impulsive boy, see *The Coming of Arthur*, 319 21 —

"And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw"

Later (*Gareth and Lynette*) he appears as a knight of brilliant achievements —

"The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright"

In *Lancelot and Elaine* we find the first hint of the taint of disloyalty —

"Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,
Not often loyal to his word."

The same Idyll says that his "wonted courtesy" was
 "Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it."

In *The Holy Grail* his want of lofty aim and serious purpose is contrasted with his ready impulsiveness: we read how, when the knights took oath to ride a twelvemonth and a day in quest of the Grail, "Gawain swore, and louder than the rest," but that soon growing "much wearied of the quest," he renounced it and spent his year in dalliance; and how, subsequently, in "foolish words—A reckless and irreverent knight was he," he ridiculed all such enterprises.

And finally, in *Pelleas and Eltarre*—though at first there flashed through his heart

"The fire of honour and all noble deeds"—

all noble impulse is dissipated by the first shock with temptation; although Pelleas knows him for the one "whom men call light of love," he trusts his pledged troth, only to find himself treacherously betrayed—

"Alas that ever knight should be so false"

It is only after Gawain's death that his spirit discovers and mourns the worthlessness of the earthly delights which in his lifetime he had put above his loyalty and his duty. The gradual lowering of Gawain's character is symbolic of that moral degeneration of the whole order of the Round Table which spoiled the purpose of Arthur's life.

The older chroniclers, before Malory, give Gawain a much nobler character, making him almost Lancelot's equal.

35. an isle of rest, "the island valley of Avilion" of line 427, below. So in Homer, *Od.* xi., the shade of Tircias foretells to Odysseus—

"So peaceful shalt thou end thy blissful days
 And steal thyself from life by slow decay." (Pope)

39 wail their way. Cf. the Canto from *The Purgatorio* of Dante, quoted above—

"As cranes,
 Chanting their dolorous notes, traaverse the sky,
 Stretched out in long array, so I beheld
 Spirits; who came loud wailing, hurried on
 By their dire doom." (Cary)

Cf. also *Hom. II.* iii. 3, and *Verg. Æn.* x. 264

41 shrill'd, but. cries. Notice the effect of the unusual break, denoted by the semicolon, after the first half foot; the reader is brought to a sudden pause, as if to listen to the shrill wail of the flying spirit. For other examples of this rhythm see General Introduction, p. xix.; and cf. *Hom. II.* i. 52, βάλλ', αὐτὸ δέ

43 As of some lords With this simile in illustration of cries of defeat and despair, contrast the one contained in lines 457-461, below, "Then from the dawn, etc.," which describe the jubilant cries welcoming King Arthur to his isle of rest.

46 light upon the wind. Cf Dante, *Purgatorio*, v 72-4 —

"Bard ' willingly
I would address those two together coming
Which seem so light before the wind." (Cary)

48 all that haunts wild So, in *Guinevere*, the Queen

"Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the spirits of the waste and weald
Moun as she fled, or thought she heard them moan "

In the same Idyll, in a description of the signs and miracles and wonders which marked the founding of the Round Table, the gladness of "spirits and men," of "the little elves," the "fairy-circle" and "merry bloated things" is specially dwelt upon. All creation sympathized with Arthur's noble purposes at the outset, and now mourns his failure.

49 go along with me, be involved in my ruin

51 let pass field. Bedivere's unimaginative and practical nature has no care for anything which he cannot see and touch and account for, all else he regards as of no significance, or, at most, as harmless.

53 thy name cloud. Cf *The Last Tournament* —

"the knights,
Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills and in the signs of heaven,"

and *To the Queen*, at the end of the *Idylls* —

"that gray king, whose name, a ghost
Streams like a cloud, man shaped, from mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still "

'Arthur's Seat' is the name given to the lofty hill near Edinburgh and to other "high places" in various parts of Great Britain, certain cromlechs in Glamorgan and in Herefordshire are known as 'Arthur's Stones.'

56 Light was Gawain. Unworthy of trust or serious regard

59 Modred. In *Guinevere* Arthur calls him

"the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen and knights,
Traitors ——"

and again, in lines 155-8, below, disclaims kinship with him. Modred's character is painted throughout the *Idylls* in the darkest colours. Even in boyhood his mean and treacherous nature

is hunted at in contrast with the frankness of the young Gawain, see *The Coming of Arthur*, 322, 3 —

“ But Modred laid his ear against the door,
And there half heard.”

Again, in *Gareth and Lynette*, 25-32, Gawain's hearty acknowledgment of young Gareth's prowess brings into strong relief Modred's ungraciousness —

“ Though Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is always sullen ”

Modred's shield in Arthur's Hall was “blank as death,” for he had done no noble deed, while Gawain's was “blazoned rich and bright ”

In the last line of *Pelleas and Ettarre*—

“ And Modred thought, ‘ The time is hard at hand ’ ”

—a hint is given that Modred had been secretly nourishing treacherous thoughts against the king, and, finally, in *Gumerere*, we read that it is Modred

“ that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne
Ready to spring, waiting a chance ”

The success of his traitorous scheming and his open rebellion bring the tale of his base life down to the date of the “last wend battle ” in the west Malory tells how, when Modred and his party had fled to Canterbury, after being worsted by Arthur in a great battle on “Barendowne ” (‘ Barham down, near Canterbury, where are still remains of an ancient burial place), “the noble king drew him with his hoast downe unto the sea side westward unto Salisbury ” In *Merlin* we read that finding Modred had retreated into Wales Arthur proceeded westward as far as Salisbury, whence he issued orders for assembling a fresh army, which was to meet him at Whitsuntide, and then continued his march still further into the West, where Modred with his force was ready to encounter him Geoffrey of Monmouth states that Modred made his last stand in Cornwall on the river *Cambula*, called *Camblan* in the *Vita Merlini* In Layamon's *Brut* the place is called *Camelford*

63 Right well King The doubts as to Arthur's rightful title to the throne, which arose out of the mystery of his birth, find frequent expression in *The Coming of Arthur* The “many rumours on this head ” are described by Bedivere (ll. 175-236), who gives his own matter of fact account of the affair, which is no mystery to his simple and loyal heart Lancelot is the first to acknowledge Arthur's title (ll. 127-9) —

“ ‘ Sir and my liege,’ he cried, ‘ the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle field,
I know thee for my king ’ ”

In *Gareth and Lynette* Bellicent, Arthur's sister, referring to the doubts of those

" who deem him not,
Or will not deem him wholly proven king,"

adds, as to her own belief,

" Albert in mine own heart I knew him king "

After this, little is said of these doubts until, as we read in *The Last Tournament*, their vows "began to gall the knighthood," and they asked whence

" Had Arthur right to bind them to himself ? "

This loss of faith, the result of the gradual weakening of the moral fibre of the Order, presages the final catastrophe

67 when we strove north. "Arthur's glorious wars" are enumerated and, some of them, briefly described by Lancelot in *Lancelot and Elaine* the Roman wall, see *The Coming of Arthur*, l 511 and note

73 And they my knights An instance of the construction known as the "pendent nominative", owing to a change of syntax in the middle of the sentence, the nominative 'they' is left without a verb Cf *The Coming of Arthur*, l 182

77 One lying Almesbury See *Guinevere* —

" prone from off her seat she fell

And grovelled with her face against the floor "

Ambrose bury, Ambresbury, Almesbury, or Amesbury, in Wiltshire, 7½ miles from Salisbury, possessed an ancient abbey of Benedictine nuns, to which, as the old chronicles relate, *Guinevere* had fled after her fall

78 Hath folded world. Has covered my path in life with darkness and confusion

✓ 81 *Lyonnesse*. A fabulous country, an extension of Cornwall to the south and west, said to be now covered by the sea There is still extant near Land's End a tradition that the Scilly Isles were once part of the mainland, similarly, in parts of Ireland, the belief exists that a large portion of the island was swallowed up by the sea and occasionally comes to the surface. The name is sometimes written *Leonnoys*.

87 phantom circle alludes to the distant sea-horizon, vague and ill defined, it is called "sea circle" in *Enoch Arden*, Cf *Ulysses*, 19, 20 —

" Whose margin fades

For ever and for ever when I move, "

also Shelley, *Euganean Hills*, 19, and Verg *Æn.* iii. 496

90 when the great lowest, i.e. in midwinter Notice the appropriateness of the seasons to the various events in Arthur's

career In *The Coming of Arthur* it is in "the night of the new year" that Arthur is born When he is married to Guinevere,

"The sacred altar blossomed white with May"

In *The Holy Grail* it is "on a summer night" that the vision appears and the quest is undertaken The date of *The Last Tournament* is placed in the "yellowing autumn tide" Guinevere's flight takes place when the white mist of early winter shrouds "the dead earth" The final catastrophe is now fitly accomplished at midnight in the dead of winter, the most sombre, most comfortless hour and season

91 rolling year Cf Latin *volventibus annis* (Vergil, *Æn* 1 234)

93 Nor ever yet west Malory's account is as follows —
 "and never was there seene a more dolefuller battaile in no Christam land, for there was but rashing and riding, foyning and stricking, and many a grim word was there spoken either to other, and many a deadly stroke And thus they fought all the long day, and never stinted till the noble knights were laid to the cold ground and ever they fought till it was nigh night, and by that time was there an hundred thousand laid dead upon the doune"
 The following description from *Le Mort Arthur*, (edited by Mr Furnivall from the Harleian MS No 2252 in the British Museum) gives a good idea of the style of the old poet —

"Arthur of batayle neuyr blaune
 To delè woundys wykke and wyde,
 Fro the morow that it begaune,
 Tylle it was nere the nightis tyde,
 There was many A sperè spente,
 And many a thro word they spake,
 Many A bronde was bowyd and bente,
 And many a knightis helme they brake
 Rychè helmes they Roffe and rent
 The Rychè rowtes gan to gedyr Rayke
 And C thousand vpon the bente,
 The boldest or evyn was made Ryght meke

As syr lucan de boteler stode
 He sey folk vpon playnès hye,
 Bold barons of bone and blode,
 They Refte theym besaunt, broche, and bee "

95 A deathwhite mist. So, in *Guinevere*,

"The white must, like a face-cloth to the face,
 Clung to the dead earth and the land was still."

In *Merlin and Vivien* Merlin has a presage of

"An ever-moaning battle in the mist
 World war of dying flesh against the life "

Contrast with the description of "this last, dim, weird battle" the brilliant picture of Arthur's first battle in *The Coming of Arthur* —

"When Arthur reach'd a field of-battle bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill
And even in high day the morning star"

These are only two out of numerous occasions that may be found in the *Idylls* when the sympathy of external nature with the actions and emotions of man is vividly pictured

98 formless, vague, ill defined, objectless

100 For friend and foe voices of the dead. With the whole of this description may be compared that of another 'weird' battle in *The Princess*. In both passages are found good examples of representative rhythm and of words whose sound echoes the sense. Thus in *The Princess* we find

"until they closed
In conflict with the crash of shivering points"

and

"And all the plain—brand, mace, and shaft, and shield—
Shock'd, like an iron clanging anvil bang'd
With hammers"

which have a close rhythmical and verbal affinity to line 188, below,

"Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,"
and the following lines.

✓103 old ghosts, spectres of foes or friends long dead, cf *The Princess* —

"I seem'd to move in old memorial tilts
And doing battle with forgotten ghosts."

109 Shield breakings helms These lines recall the war song of Arthur's knighthood at his marriage in *The Coming of Arthur* —

"Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
Clang battleaxe and crash brand, let the King reign."

A fine contrast may be noted between the jubilant strain in this song, prompted by faith in the King and his mission, and the echo of hopeless consternation arising from the despairing shocks of this dim battle and the

"shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist"

114. monstrous blasphemies So in the battle of Armageddon, Bible, *Rev* xvi., men "blasphemed the name of God" Armageddon has been thought to be typical of the great final contest between good and evil in this world, and, so far, is of a similar significance to this

"battle in the West
Where all of high and holy dies away" (*To the Queen*)

119 or thro' death, either because of death

120 Notice the appropriateness of the dominant letter 's' in this line, representing the sibilant splash of the waves

129 the wan wave Cf 'wan water,' *Gareth and Lynette* In *Le Mort Arthur* we have the line

"But watres depe and wawes wanne"

See line 238, below, and note

132 hollow helmets, empty, having fallen off the heads of the slain

135 The voice to be The ocean has frequently been used in literature as a symbol of Time and Eternity Cf *Shaks Sonnets*, ix. 1, 2 —

"Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end"

and Byron's "Address to the Ocean," *Childe Harold*, iv —

"The image of Eternity"

140 wastes move The sea slowly eating into the shore is an apt type of *tempus edax rerum*, 'Time that eats things away' Colton says "Time is the most subtle of depredators and by appearing to take nothing is permitted to take all"

143 for on my heart King In the throes of the last dread struggle, as his physical strength ebbs low, the king's "sensuous frame Is racked with pangs that conquer trust" (*In Mem v*), and he begins almost to doubt the significance of his own mystic origin and the divine sanction of his "boundless purpose."

147 King everywhere house Bedivere's simple loyalty is no prey to doubt, his practical temper finds no room for discussion while work remains to be done, but insists on prompt action with what powers are still available

157 My house vows Cf Bible, *Luke*, xii 49, 50, "And he stretched forth his hand to his disciples and said, 'Behold my mother and my brethren!' For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother"

170 So all day long The original fragment *Morte d'Arthur* began at this point. The lines "So all day long King Arthur," which introduced the shorter poem, are here retained, to serve, perhaps, as a sort of recapitulation of the lines now prenexed,

that the reader's attention may be concentrated on the last scene which follows

172 King Arthur's table, the knights of the Round Table
See note to *The Coming of Arthur*, l 17 man by man, one after another

177 chancel, the eastern and most sacred portion of a church, formerly always separated from the main part of the building by a screen of lattice work (Lat. *cancelli*, cross bars)

178 strait, a narrow tongue of land, the word is more usually applied to a narrow passage in the ocean.

180 a great water Since the poet wishes to represent the general impression produced by the view from the chapel, he avoids all detail, and uses the vague words 'a water' instead of 'a lake' The beholder would not at first sight notice whether it was a lake or a broad river, all he would be conscious of would be a spreading sheet of water of size and shape unknown, and the picture is presented to the reader just as it would first strike the eye of Sir Bedivere. Subsequently, where no such instantaneous impression is depicted, the words 'mere' and 'lake' are used Cf *Derwentwater*, *Gala Water*, etc the sequel, what follows as the result of this day's fight

182 unsolders, disunites, breaks into pieces *Solder* (from the same root as *solid*) is a kind of metallic cement for uniting the surfaces of metals, it is often composed of zinc (or silver) and copper It is sometimes spelt and pronounced *sodder* or *sawder*

183 fellowship, confederation, united band (of knights of the Round Table)

184 whereof record, of all the fellowships of which, etc such a sleep The comparison of death to sleep is very common in Homer, Vergil, and other classical poets Thus Homer, *Il*, ii 241, has κοιμήσατο χαλκεον ὕπνον, 'he slept an iron sleep', cf Vergil, *Æn*, x 745, *ferreus urget somnus*, and Moschus's ἀτρέμωνα νήρετον ὕπνον See also *In Mem*, lxvii, "Sleep, death's twin brother" So in the Bible, *Acts*, vii. 60, Stephen "fell on sleep" Cf *cemetery*, literally 'sleeping place'

189 Camelot, the city where Arthur held his court, now identified with a village called *Queen Camel*, in Somersetshire, where remains of the vast entrenchments of an ancient town are still to be seen The traditions of *Queen Camel* still preserve the name of Arthur, the bridge over the river Camel is called 'Arthur's Bridge,' and there is a spring in the neighbourhood called 'Arthur's Well.' A description of Arthur's mysterious hall at Camelot is given in the Idyll of *The Holy Grail* in the lines beginning—

"O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago"

190 I perish made, my life, and with it all my noble purposes, is brought to ruin by those whom I was the first to form into one people See *The Coming of Arthur* —

“ But either failed to make the kingdom one
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And through the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty principedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reigned ”

191 Merlin. See *The Coming of Arthur*, note to l 150 The Idyll of *Merlin and Vivien* gives an account of Merlin's fate See also Matthew Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*

192. let what will be, be, whatever my future may be

195 Excalibur See *The Coming of Arthur*, note to line 294

199 clothed in white samite See *The Coming of Arthur*, l 284 and note The recurrence of this line recalls the ‘permanent epithets’ noticed under l. 6

202 sung or told, celebrated in song or story

205 fling him. Arthur regards the magic sword as a person endowed with life and power of its own mere, lake or pool, the word originally meant ‘that which is dead,’ hence a desert, waste, or stagnant pool, cf Lat *mare* and Skt *maru*, a desert, from *mri*, to die, also French *mare* and English *marsh*

206 seest, a dissyllable lightly, numbly or quickly Malory's words are—“My lord, said Sir Bedevere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly (I will) bring you word again” ‘Lightly’ in this sense is common in Spenser's *Faery Queen*.

211 hest, from O E. *hæts*, command,—commonly written with the prefix *behest* The *t* is an added letter as in *whilst* *t* Chaucer uses *hest*, “the second *hest* of God,” *Pardoner's Tale*, 185, Spenser, *F Q* vii 18, has “holy *heasts*,” and the word is frequently used by Shakspeare see *The Tempest*, i. 2 274, iii. 1 37, etc, it occurs also in *Pelleas and Etarre*, “acted her *hest*” at full, to the utmost, thoroughly

215 mighty bones The bones of the Danish invaders heaped up in part of the church building at Hythe are abnormally large sized, and seem to show that “there were giants in those days” As noted above, there are still extant traces of ancient tombs at Barham down

218 by zig zag rocks The short, sharp vowel sounds and the numerous dental letters in this line, making it broken in rhythm and difficult to pronounce, are in fine contrast with the broad vowels and liquid letters which make the next line run smoothly and easily off the tongue The sound in each line exactly echoes the sense, the crooked and broken path leads to the smooth and level shore

219 levels The plural is probably suggested by the Latin plural, *aequora* Brimley suggests, perhaps too ingeniously, that the poet may be hunting that what looks, when seen from the high ground, "a great water," becomes a series of flashing surfaces to the eyes of a man standing on the shore

223 keen with frost, clear in the frosty air

225 topaz lights The topaz is a jewel of various colours, yellow, or green, or blue, or brown Perhaps from Skt *tapas*, fire jacinth, another form of *hyacinth*, a precious stone of the colour of the hyacinth flower, blue and purple Cf *The Coming of Arthur*, 297 9

226 subtlest, most skilfully wrought, or in a most intricate pattern

228 this way mind This expression is an imitation of Vergil, *Aen* viii 20, *Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illic*, 'And he divides his swift mind now this way, now that' Cf Homer, *Il* i 188, *ἐν δὲ οἱ ἦτορ διδόνδ' ἄρα μεμνημένον*

229 in act to throw, an expression much used by Pope in his translation of the *Iliad* Cf *Il* iii 349, *ῥήνυτο χαλκῷ*, which Pope renders—

"Atreides then his massy lance prepares,
In act to throw"

231 water flags, aquatic plants of the genus *Iris*

233 so strode back slow These words are all accented, and the line thus becomes heavy and slow to pronounce, the rhythm thus echoes the heavy slow steps of Sir Bedivere

238 washing in the reeds—lapping on the crag It has been remarked that these two phrases mark exactly "the difference of sound produced by water swelling up against a permeable or impermeable barrier" The water would splash softly through the reeds, but would make a sharper sound when striking against the impenetrable rock *Lap* means, generally, to 'lick up with the tongue, as a dog drinks', and hence, as here, to 'make a sharp sound as a dog does when drinking' Malory's words are, "I saw nothing but the waters wap (? beat) and the waves wan (? ebb)" [But in the *Le Mort Arthur*, Bedivere answers that he sees nothing

"But watres depe and waves wanne"

May not the 'wap' in Malory be a printer's error for 'deep'? If so, 'wan' also is an adjective, as in 'wan wave,' line 129, above]

241. betrayed thy nature, been false to thy instinctive sense of honour and to thy title of knight. Malory says, "And thou

art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the riches of the sword."

243 *fēalty*, a doublet of *fidelity*

248 as thou art lief and dear Copied from Malory *Lief* is from the same root as *love*, and means *beloved* Shakspeare (2 *Henry VI* i 1 28) has '*alder-liefest*,' dearest of all

252 counting pebbles In times of grave moment, when the mind is absorbed in deep contemplation of some event of surpassing importance, the senses often mechanically employ themselves in noticing trifling objects cf *Maud*, ii 2 8 —

"Strange, that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense
One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye—
That it should, by being so overwrought,
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
For a shell or a flower, little things
Which else would have been past by !"

254 chased, engraved *Chased* is a contraction of *enchased* literally, *incased*, or 'enclosed in a case or cover', hence, 'covered with engraved ornament'

257 one worthy note, i.e. 'a thing worthy of note, a notable thing'

258 should thus be lost, ought (according to natural expectation) to be lost

262. the bond of rule, the tie uniting the ruled to the ruler, the connecting link between a king and his subjects, which alone makes systematic government possible

266 what record kept. For all his loyalty the worthy Bedivere can only partially recognise the scope of Arthur's purpose and life work. Unless some material and palpable relic of the King is preserved, he thinks no trace of his deeds will remain for posterity

267 empty breath, unsubstantial, impalpable report

268 rumours of a doubt, vague traditions of a mythical person

270 joust (or *jost*); a tournament or sham fight, literally, a 'meeting together,' from Lat *juxta*, near, close

272 maiden of the Lake See *The Coming of Arthur*, 282 293 Malory thus describes Arthur's first meeting with this lady "With that they saw a damsel going on the lake What damsel is that?" said Arthur That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin,

and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a palace as any on earth, and richly beseen " The Lady of the Lake is in some of the romances identified with Vivien Lancelot is called 'Lancelot of the Lake' from his having been educated at this lady's court, see the Idyll of *Lancelot and Elaine*, where the Lady is said to have stolen Lancelot from his mother's arms

276 winning reverence, gaining respectful admiration from his hearers for this romantic story now were lost, would be lost if I were to throw the sword away

278 clouded with his own conceit, his power of clearly distinguishing right from wrong being obscured by his own false notion conceit = conception, notion

280 and so strode, etc The frequent repetition of single lines should be noticed, it is Homeric.

281 spoke Varied from *spake*, above, to prevent monotony

287 miserable, mean, base

289 Authority will When the commanding look that inspires awe and obedience passes from the eye of a king, he loses therewith his authority over his subjects A critic has remarked that this personification (of authority) is 'thoroughly Shakespearean', it assists the imagination without distressing the understanding, as when dwelt on and expanded in detail, deepening the impression of the sentiment by giving along with a true thought a grand picture" (Brunley's *Essays*) Cf Elizabeth's words to Cecil "*Must*," she exclaimed, "*is must* a word to be addressed to princes? Little man, little man, thy father, if he had been alive, durst not have used that word, but thou hast grown presumptuous, because thou knowest that I shall die" (Langard, *Hist of England*, vi 316) Cf also *Queen Mary*, v 5 —

"The Queen is dying or you dare not say it."

290 laid widow'd, helplessly bereft Tennyson uses this bold metaphorical word again in his *In Memoriam*, xvii, "my widow'd race," and lxxv, "My heart, though widow'd," and in *Queen Mary*, i. 5, "widow'd channel"

293 offices, services, duty, cf Lat. *officium*

296 giddy, frivolous, transient.

298. prosper, succeed in doing his duty

300 with my hands Perhaps because he had now no sword, or, more probably, these words are introduced in imitation of Homer's graphic insertion of specific details cf *ποσσὶν ἤε μακρὰ βήσας*, 'he went taking long steps with his feet' Notice the touch of human personality in the king's sharp anger, otherwise Arthur is generally represented by Tennyson as a rather colour

less being, and as almost "too good for human nature's daily food." Guinevere in *Lancelot and Elaine* calls him

"the faultless king,

The passionate perfection"

301 then quickly rose, etc. "Every word tells of rapid, agitated determined action, refusing to dally with temptation" (Brimley)

304. wheel'd, swung it round over his head.

305 made lightnings, made a succession of brilliant flashes

306 and flashing in an arch. "A splendid instance of sound answering to sense, which the older critics made so much of, the additional syllable (in the last foot, in *an ārch*) which breaks the measure and necessitates an increased rapidity of utterance, seeming to express to the ear the rush of the sword up its parabolic curve" (Brimley)

307 streamer of the northern morn, tongue of light shooting from the horizon, one form of the *Aurora Borealis* Cf Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, iv 9 —

"Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north"

308 moving isles of winter, floating icebergs Observe how the poet in three lines presents a complete picture of one of nature's grandest phenomena, thus introducing a most vivid simile without interrupting the flow of the narrative Notice the compression of style shock, collide.

311 dipt, went below *To dip* generally means 'to put under the surface', here 'to go under'

316 drawing thicker breath, breathing more heavily as being nearer death.

317 now see I by thine eyes Arthur had no need now to ask of Bedivere if he had obeyed the command, the expression of the knight's eyes told enough The sudden exclamation is very dramatic

323 three lives of mortal men Homer (*Odys* iii. 245) says of Nestor that he had been king during three generations of men In later times Nestor was called *τρεῖς γενεάς*.

334 my wound cold Malory's words are, "Alas, the wound in your head hath caught much cold."

335 half rose, slowly, with pain. The two long syllables at the end of one line, and the pauses after the first and second feet of the next line, admirably represent the slow and interrupted effort of the wounded king to rise.

337 wistfully, with eager longing *Wistful* is probably by origin a misspelling of *icishful*, from the mistaken idea that it was connected with O. E. *wis*, know

338 as in a picture, as the eyes of a painted portrait often have a fixed and expectant gaze Cf *Æschylus, Agamemnon*, 210, *ὡς ἐν γράφῃς*, 'She (Iphigenia) cast at each of those who sacrificed a piteous glance, gazing as (one) in a picture'

345 nightmare A fiend or witch, supposed to cause evil dreams. Skelton has "Medusa, that mare" (i.e. that hag)

350 clothed with his breath, enveloped as by a cloak in a mist caused by his own damp breath clinging round him in the frosty air

351 larger than human. Cf the Idyll of *Günnevere* —

"The moony vapour rolling round the king,
Who seemed the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold"

Cf also *Dream of Fair Women*, l. 87, and the Latin *humano major* (Ovid, *Fasts* ii. 503)

353 like a goad The remorse he felt for his disobedience, and the fear that the king might suddenly die, urged him on as a goad urges oxen.

354 harness, originally, as here, body armour

356 bare black cliff clanged. Observe the alliteration and the number of accented monosyllables succeeding each other, thus representing the successive reverberations of sound Wordsworth (*Slating*) has a passage equally full of sound —

"With the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud,
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron"

based, planted, the word is generally used in a metaphorical sense.

358 dint of armed heels, the tread of iron shod heels

363 ware, aware, cf Bible, *Acts*, xiv. 6 "They were ware of it"

364 dense, thickly crowded

365 black stoled. The *stole* was a long loose robe reaching to the feet. Cf "In stoles of white" (*Sir Galahad*) With this description contrast that of the ship in *The Coming of Arthur*, 374 5 —

"And all from stern to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks."

like a dream As unearthly and indistinct as images seen in a dream.

366 three Queens See *The Coming of Arthur*, 275 8 —

"Three fair Queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need"

Malory says, "One was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay, the other was the Queen of Northgales, the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands"

367 shivered to the tingling stars, thrilled as it mounted through the air and reached the stars that trembled in response Cf *The May Queen* —

"Then seemed to go right up to heaven and die among the stars" and *Ænone*, l 215 —

"Between the loud stream and the trembling stars"

In reply to the objection that this line "has a touch of exaggeration which belongs to the 'spasmodic' school," Brimley remarks, "But the cry comes from a company of spirits amid mountains whose natural power of echo is heightened by the silence of night, the clearness of the winter air, and the hardening effects of frost. Such a cry, at such a time, and in such a place, would thrill from rock to rock, from summit to summit, till it seemed to pierce the sky in a hurtling storm of multitudinous arrow sounds, and die away in infinitely distant pulsations among the stars"

370 where no one comes "The mournfulness of the feeling a man would experience in such a place, from the sense of utter isolation and sterility, is blended with the naturally sad wail of the wind over a wide waste, and the addition thus becomes no mere completion of a thought of which only part is wanted for illustration but gives a heightening of sentiment without which the illustration would be incomplete and less impressive" (Brimley) Compare Keats's—

"Undescribed sounds

That come a swooning over hollow grounds
And wither wearily on barren moors"

375 rose the tallest fairest, rose above the others in height as she stood Malory says, "Morgan le Fay that was as fair a lady as any might be"

381 like the withered moon, like the moon when its light is fading before the early beams of the rising sun Cf *Fatima* —

"Faints like a dazzled morning moon."

Also Shelley, *Ode to the Skylark*, 13-16 —

“Keen as are the arrows Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows In the white dawn clear”

383 greaves, armour for the lower part of the legs derivation uncertain cuisses, armour for the thighs Lat *coza*, thigh dashed with drops of onset, splashed with drops of blood from the encounter Cf. *The Princess* —

“Though dashed with death,
He reddens what he kisses.”

“‘Onset’ is a very generic term, poetic because removed from all vulgar associations of common parlance, and vaguely suggestive not only of war’s pomp and circumstance, but of high deeds also and heroic arts, since onset belongs to mettle and daring, the word, for vast and shadowy connotation, is akin to Milton’s grand abstraction, ‘Far off *his coming* shone,’ or Shelley’s ‘Where the earthquake demon taught her *young ruin*’” (Roden Noel in *The Contemporary Review*) Cf. *The Last Tournament* —

“Belted his body with her *white embrace*.”

384. light and lustrous, fair in colour and shining Arthur is described in *The Coming of Arthur* as “fair beyond the race of Britons and of men.”

385 like a rising sun. The fair bright locks are compared with the rays surrounding the disc of the rising sun. Cf. Milton, *P L* iii. 625 —

“Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
Circled his head, nor less his locks behind
Illustrious on his shoulders.”

Arthur is thus described in *The Last Tournament* —

“That victor of the Pagan throned in hall,
His hair, a sun that rayed from off a brow
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
The golden beard that clothed his lips with light”

Cf. *Tithonus* —

“Thy dim curls kindle into sunny rings”

386 high from the dais throne, as he sat on the throne elevated on the dais or platform.

392 shot through the lists, as a brilliant meteor or ‘shooting’ star glances across the sky

396 my forehead and mine eyes This definite specification of separate items, instead of using the general term ‘face,’ is true to the Homeric pattern, see l 300, above

400 the light myrrh. Arthur is compared with the star in the East which appeared at Christ’s birth to the Magi, or Wise

Men, and led them to Bethlehem where they, presented to the new-born Child offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. See Bible, *Matthew*, ii. 11

403. image of the mighty world. "Also Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of the roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right. For all the world, Christian and heathen, repair unto the Round Table, and when they are chosen to be of the fellowship of the Round Table, they think them more blessed and more in worship than if they had gotten half the world" (Malory). The belief that the world was in form round and flat, like the top of a round table, prevailed even after the globe had been circumnavigated. See *Columbus* —

"for at last their Highnesses

Were half-assured this earth might be a sphere"

404. companionless Malory's words are, "Ah, my Lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies?"

405. the days darken, the future seems dark and dreary

406. other minds, unsympathetic minds, different from those I have known.

408. the old to new, a line often quoted. It occurs also in *The Coming of Arthur*, 508, when the king is described as refusing to give tribute to Rome, on the ground that "the slowly fading mistress of the world" had had her day, and must give place to a new and stronger power. Cf. *In Mem. Prol.* —

/"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be."

409. God ways, God has many methods of accomplishing on earth His purposes, which are part of His nature, and often lays aside the methods He has been using to replace them by others

410. lest one world, lest men's hearts, relying too much upon old established usage, should stagnate and grow slothful for want of change, and thus a lifeless formalism should take the place of active belief and vigorous endeavour

411. comfort thyself, etc Malory's words are, "Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust to trust in. For I will unto the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound, and if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul."

412. that which pure, may God accept my work and, absorbing it, as it were, into Himself, purify it of all its unworthy elements.

417 like a fountain. Cf *Enoch Arden* —

“Prayer
Like fountains of sweet waters in the sea”

419 that nourish brain, whose brute nature is blind to anything outside or above what they can estimate by instinct or material sense Cf *Shaks Ant and Cleo* iv 8 21 —

“A brain that nourishes our nerves.”

422. every way, on all sides.

423 bound by gold chains feet of God. Cf *Harold*, iii. 2 —

“prayer,
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world
And touches Him that made it”

The notion of the earth being attached to heaven by a golden chain perhaps originated in the passage in Homer's *Iliad*, viii. 19 30, cf Plato, *Theæt* 153 Frequent allusions to this supposition are to be found scattered throughout English literature Thus Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning*, i. l 3, says, “According to the allegory of the poets the highest link of nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair” cf *Adv of L* ii vi 1 Jeremy Taylor writes “Faith is the golden chain to link the penitent sinner to God” Cf also “This is the golden chain of love, whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator” (Hare), and

“She held a great gold chaine ylncked well,
Whose upper end to highest heaven was knitt”
—Spenser, *F Q* ii vii 46

“Hanging in a golden chain
This pendant world”—Milton, *P L* ii. 1051

“It (true love) is a golden chain let down from heaven,
Whose links are bright and even,
That falls like sleep on lovers”
—Jonson, *Love's Martyr*

“For, letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky”
—Dryden, *Character of a Good Parson*

427 island-valley of Avilion Avilion, or, as it is otherwise spelt Avelion, or Avalon (“dozing in the Vale of Avalon,” *Palace of Art*), is supposed to have been the name of a valley in the neighbourhood of Glastonbury, the town in Somersetshire where Joseph of Arimathea is said to have first landed from his boat with the Holy Grail. [See the Idyll of *The Holy Grail*] Avilion is called an island as being nearly surrounded by the “river's embracement” Cf Drayton, *Polyolbion*, iii. —

"O three times famous isle! where is that place that might
Be with thyself compared for glory and delight
Whilst Glastonbury stood?"

Some romances, however, make it an ocean island "not far on this side of the terrestrial Paradise," and represent it as the abode of Arthur and Morgan Le Fay. Compare with these myths the accounts of the "Islands of the Blest," the "Fortunate Islands" of Greek and Roman legends, whither the favourites of the Gods were conveyed without dying (see *Ulysses*, l. 63), also the tales of the "Flying Island of St. Brendan," and of the "Green Islands of the Ocean" in Southey's *Maiden*. Many legends tell of various enchanted islands, and the names of a number of them may be found in the *Voyage of Madeline*. 'A dion' is said to mean 'Isle of Apples,' from the Breton *aval*, apple.

428. where falls loudly Cf. the description of the abode of the Gods in Tennyson's *Lucretius*, also the accounts of Elysium in Homer, *Odys.* i. 56 and vi. 42, and Lucretius, *De Rerum Nat.* iii. 20, and Bion, iii. 16.

430 deep meadow'd, a translation of the Greek *βαθυσταυρος*, 'with rich fertile meadows,' Homer, *Il.* ix. 151 happy Cf. Vergil's *lætæ vespæ*, 'happy (= plentiful) harvest' orchard lawns, grassy plots with fruit trees growing on them.

431. crown'd with summer sea, ringed round with stormy seas as with a coronet Cf. Homer, *Odys.* x. 195, *περὶ ὅσων πέτρων ἐκκρήνεται*, 'Round the island the sea lies like a crown' The surrounding sea is elsewhere (*Maid.* l. 6) called by Tennyson

"The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the land."

With "summer sea" compare Wordsworth's

"And all was tranquil as a summer sea."—(*Slating*)

435. ere her death. The tradition that the swan previously to her death sings a sweet song is one of long standing. Cf. Vergil, 'qualis trajectus tempora pennâ Cantat olor' See *The Dying Swan*, also Shakspeare's *Othello*, v. 2, "I will play the swan and die in music," and many other passages. Mr. Nicol says of the *Cygnus Musicus*, "Its note resembles the tones of a violin, though somewhat higher. Each note occurs after a long interval. The music presages a thaw in Iceland, and hence one of its greatest charms."

436 ruffles her pure cold plume, unfolds her white clear wing-feathers. takes the flood, strikes the water

437 swarthy webs, alluding to the dark colour of the swan's webbed feet

438 revolving many memories. Cf the Latin *multa animo
revolvens*, 'revolving many things in his mind'

439 one black dot, a single speck of black on the bright horizon
where the day was dawning The barge carries Arthur away to
vanish in the East, "whence all religions are said to spring"

445 'From the great goes' The weird rhyme occurs in
Merlin's "riddling triplets of old time", see *The Coming of
Arthur*, 409, 10 and note

453 the three need. See l. 366, above, and note

460 as if wars Contrast this united cry of triumph and
welcome with the dim cries of despair in lines 41 45, and with
the "agony of lamentation," "as it were one voice," in lines
368 9, above.

464 Straining hand. So in Sophocles, *Œdipus Coloneus*,
1650, Theseus gazes after a king who is also passing away in
mystery—

δμμάτων ἐπισκιοῦ
χεῖρ' ἀντέχοντα κρατὸς

469 And the new new year The cycle of the mystic year
is now complete from Arthur's birth—

"that same night, the night of the new year,
Was Arthur born—"

to his passing away before the dawn of another new year, and
from this point

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new"

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